An apocalypse for the Church and for the world : a literary-narrative and tradition-historical reading of the Book of Revelation

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An Apocalypse for the Church and for the World:

A Literary-Narrative and Tradition-Historical Reading of the Book of Revelation

by

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD

The University of Durham

Department of Theology and Religion

2005

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Thesis Title: An Apocalypse for the Church and for the World: A Literary-Narrative and Tradition-Historical Reading of the Book of Revelation

Abstract

The language of John's Apocalypse employs conflicting images regarding participation in the final establishment of God's kingdom. This study addresses the problem of how universally inclusive language in such visions is to be understood in light of equally prominent descriptions of judgment and strict community boundaries. Certain passages depict the participation of all earth's peoples in the eschatological scenario (15.3-4; 21.3,24,26; 22.2), while others anticipate their destruction (3.10; 6.15-17; 16.14-21; 19.17-21; 20.11-15). This thesis defends the narrative integrity of Revelation by presenting evidence of similar communicative strategies in Jewish apocalyptic literature from the Second Temple period. These writings provide a literary context within which John's use of biblical traditions (especially Psalm 2 and Isaiah 60) may be seen to reflect common interpretive patterns. These include: use of universal language as vindication of the faithful; evidence of narrative progression or development within a document; the presence of literary qualifiers within universally inclusive visions; and use of "stock" idioms and epithets to designate opponents and antagonists of the faithful community. At the same time, this thesis recognizes that the use of universal language in Revelation also reflects the author's distinctive principles and assumptions. Most notably, this study identifies: John's understanding of the exalted Christ as the eschatological fulfillment of Davidic / Solomonic ideals (1.5; 21.24-26); and, his belief in the trans-national constitution of the faithful community (5.9; 7.9).

Declaration:

None of the material contained in this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree in this or any other university.

Statement of Copyright:

For Kathy,

and for

Annaliese, Jaeden, Adrienne & Avrielle

Acknowledgments

Many people and influences have providentially contributed to the completion of this research project. I wish to thank my *Doktorvater*, Prof Loren T. Stuckenbruck, for his guidance and encouragement throughout the course of study here in Durham. His penetrating insight and attention to detail influenced the shape and development of this thesis; more importantly, I have been inspired by his commitment to intellectual integrity and passion for early Jewish literature. Further, the Department of Theology & Religion at the University of Durham has provided a fruitful context within which the exchange of ideas, both in formal seminars and informal discussion, has been most stimulating. In particular, I wish to thank Professors Jimmy Dunn and John Barclay for their warm engagement and personal friendship. I am indebted to Dr Sven Soderlund for being a friend / mentor / counselor. He so often provided the perspective I needed most at just the right time. During the final stages of the writing of this thesis I benefited greatly from the editorial comments of Ms Naomi Jacobs and Dr Archie Wright.

An undertaking of this kind would simply not be possible without the generous support of family, friends and various societies. In various forms I received scholarships, grants, and loans from the governments of Canada and Alberta, the Panacea Society (Bedford, UK), Ustinov College (Durham), and the Department of Theology & Religion (Durham). Further, among a significant group of people who have contributed to this project prayerfully and financially, I wish to acknowledge in particular Randy and Debbie Pick and George Rabb. New Life Assembly (Delta, BC) kindly sponsored me with their scholarship program. Finally, our parents, Rev Reinhold and Elsie Herms and Walter and Sharon Beselt, have been a constant source of spiritual strength, unflagging moral support, and generous financial commitment. I am also grateful for the creative ways they found to 'shorten' the distance between England and Canada for our family.

During our time in Durham, we found welcoming community at St John's College, St Nicholas Anglican Church, and King's Church. So many people have made a lasting impact on our family but perhaps none so as Brad and Kori Embry and Archie Wright. Our memories of these years will always include, and carry into the future, the gift of their friendship.

No one has believed more steadfastly, or waited more patiently, throughout the past three and a half years than Kathy. She has taken every challenge as an adventure, kept faith and hope alive, made our house a home, and provided what I needed most – a best friend. Annaliese, Jaeden, Adrienne and Avrielle have been our constant joy in this journey. I can't think of anyone I would rather spend time with. It is to my family that this project is dedicated.

Τῷ καθημένῳ ἐπὶ τῷ θρόνῳ καὶ τῷ ἀρνίῳ ἡ εὐλογία καὶ ἡ τιμὴ καὶ
ἡ δόξα καὶ τὸ κράτος εἰς τοῦς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων

Publication Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABRL	Anchor Bible Religious Library
ArBib	The Aramaic Bible
APAT	*Die Apokryphen und Pseudepigraphen des Alten Testaments.* Translated and edited by E. Kautzsch. 2 vols. Tübingen, 1900
APOT	*The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament.* Edited by R.H. Charles. 2 vols. Oxford, 1913
BAGD	Bauer, W., W.F. Arndt, F.W. Gingrich, and F.W. Danker. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.* 2d ed. Chicago, 1979
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologicarum lovaniensium
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
Bib	*Biblica*
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
BRev	*Bible Review*
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
BZNW	*Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CEJL	Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature
CRINT	Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CurBS	*Currents in Research: Biblical Studies*
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literature des Alten and Neuen Testaments
FSBP	Fontes et Subsidia ad Biblium Pertinentes
HBT	*Horizons in Biblical Theology*
HDR	Harvard Dissertations in Religion
HermCS	Hermeneia Commentary Series
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
HTKAT	Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching.
ICC	International Critical Commentary
Int	*Interpretation*

IVPNTCS	InterVarsity Press New Testament Commentary Series
JAL	Jewish Apocryphal Literature Series
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods*
JSJS	Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplement Series
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
JSP	*Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha: Supplement Series
JWSTP	*Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*. Edited by M.E. Stone. CRINT 2.2. Assen/Philadelphia, 1984
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommetar über das Neue Testament (Meyer-Kommentar)
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NJBC	*New Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Edited by R.E. Brown, et al. London, Geoffrey Chapman, 1990
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplements
NTAbh	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
OTP	*Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Edited by J.H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. New York, 1983, 1985
PBTMS	Paternoster Biblical and Theological Monograph Series
PTMS	Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series
PVTG	Pseudepigrapha Veteris Testamenti Graece
RevQ	*Revue de Qumran*
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSP	*Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers*
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology

SFSHJ	South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SVTG	Studia in Veteris Testamenti graece
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti pseudepigraphica
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by G. Kittel and G. Friedrich. Translated by G.W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids, 1964-1976
TDOT	*Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Edited by G.J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren. Translated by J.T. Willis, G.W. Bromiley, and D.E. Green. 8 vols. Grand Rapids, 1974–
TRE	*Theologisches Realenzyklopädie*. Edited by G. Krause and G. Müller. Berlin, 1977-
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
VT	*Vetus Testmentum*
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WMANT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*

Standard Abbreviations

2T	Second Temple
2TP	Second Temple period
AA	The *Animal Apocalypse**
B.C.E.	Before Common Era
C.E.	Common Era
ca.	circa
cent.	century
HB	Hebrew Bible
LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament

* *AA* as a publication abbreviation for *Archäologischer Anzeiger* is not used in this thesis.

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Part A: Introduction

CHAPTER ONE:

Introduction

"...righteous and dependable are your ways, O King of the nations! Who will not revere you, Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy, and all nations will come and worship before you, because your acts of justice have been revealed..."

(Rev 15.3-4)

1.1 Description of the Problem[1]

The book of Revelation graphically envisions the full consummation of the Kingdom of God whereby evil is finally and totally destroyed. On this point, virtually all interpreters of John's Apocalypse agree. However, how the author expects the conclusive victory of God to determine the fate of earth's peoples is not immediately clear. This problem remains an area of considerable debate among commentators: Will the full realization of God's kingdom be characterized by the destruction of all earth's peoples, save the faithful, or will the nations finally acknowledge God as Creator and King in a comprehensive moment of repentance and conversion? Richard Bauckham expresses this tension with the following question: "Does Revelation expect the nations to be won from Satanic deception and converted to the worship of God, or does it expect them to persist in rebellion until they perish under God's final judgment?"[2]

On one side of this debate, several passages in Revelation describe the eschaton in terms that suggest the universal participation of earth's peoples. These include both visions that depict universal worship of God (5.13; 11.13; 14.6-20; 15.2-4) and visionary descriptions of the New Jerusalem where the city's inhabitants are portrayed with inclusive language (21.3; 21.24-26; 22.2). In what sense do these eschatological scenes reflect the author's final word on the outcome of God's enactment of justice for the nations? On the other side, a number of passages suggest final, comprehensive judgment and destruction of unrepentant peoples and nations (1.7; 3.10; 6.15-17; 11.14-18; 16.12-21; 19.17-21; 20.11-15). Further, the motif of repentance in Revelation – both within the

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[1] This thesis is formatted according to Patrick Alexander, et al., eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999). Technical terms appear in inverted commas.

[2] Richard Bauckham, "The Conversion of the Nations," in his *The Climax of Prophecy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 241.

believing community (2.5,16,21; 3.3,19; 22.14) and its absence in the response of earth's peoples to God's judging activity (9.20-21; 16.9,11) – is often emphasized. Can such negative images simply be attributed to the literary or rhetorical interests of the author without carrying the weight of 'real' implications? How can the author expect such graphic portrayals of negative judgment to function meaningfully if he ultimately commends a view of eschatological salvation that makes them largely unnecessary? Moreover, is it significant that no unambiguous description of a moment of universal conversion actually exists in Revelation?

Weighing the evidence of conflicting 'universalizing terminology' in the visions of Revelation is an important task. If, however, the linguistic and conceptual evidence can be found to sustain the view that the Apocalypse envisions the ultimate repentance and conversion of the nations (as Bauckham suggests), such a conclusion raises a further problem: In view of the uncompromising exhortations to the faithful throughout Revelation (2.4-5,10,14-16,24-25; 3.2-3,11-12,18-19; 13.9-10,18; 14.12; 16.15; 18.4) – even alongside descriptions of the eschatological kingdom (21.7-8,27; 22.7,11-12,14-15,18-19) – how can a perspective of the global conversion of the nations be maintained? In other words, can the gospel be strict, yet universal?

1.2 Identifying the Issues

At present, no broad consensus exists among scholars on how the fate of the nations is conceived in Revelation; however, the discussion may be classified as follows: First, the majority of commentators in the twentieth century have viewed the presence of traditions with 'universal tendencies' as a logical (if not theological) problem for interpreting the Apocalypse. In a variety of ways, these readings have proposed solutions in which the literal meaning of John's universal symbols is not defended.[3] A second, mediating perspective has been advocated by literary-narrative critics. These scholars maintain that it is precisely this unresolved tension, which gives these antithetical visions their fullest rhetorical force.[4] Finally, a certain degree of momentum has recently been building among a minority of commentators who favour a positively universal reading of

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[3] See below Chapter 2 (2.2 and 2.3).

[4] With respect to John's Apocalypse, the main commentators who advocate a literary-narrative method are David Barr, Eugene Boring, and Leonard Thompson (see Chapter 2 [2.4] below).

the fate of the nations in Revelation – nothing less than their conversion is an acceptable outcome of the final establishment of God's rule on earth.[5]

Richard Bauckham's collection of essays on Revelation entitled *The Climax of Prophecy* provides a stimulating discussion of this issue. His proposal attempts to correct the tendency among commentators toward indecision on this issue. His conclusion is that the latter view best represents the data of Revelation and he describes it as "probably the most important and original contribution made here [i.e. his book] to the understanding of the message of the Apocalypse."[6] Though this particular view is yet a minority one, Bauckham's treatment of this issue on its own terms – as opposed to its marginal handling in most commentaries – invites response and further dialogue. The issue, however, has not been resolved as definitively as Bauckham supposes. Thus, while a wide range of relevant secondary literature is consulted here, Bauckham's work serves both as a necessary point of departure and ongoing dialogue partner.

1.3 Purpose of the Present Study

The contention of this study is that research on the fate of the nations in Revelation has neglected serious engagement of similar issues raised in the early Jewish apocalyptic milieu. Several important factors necessitate a comprehensive evaluation of this subject on its own terms. First, there is much to be gained from first-hand analysis of Jewish apocalyptic traditions regarding the eschatological fate of the nations. In some cases, commentators on Revelation demonstrate awareness of the possible influences upon John's thought from within Second Temple (hereafter 2T) Judaism (i.e. David Aune, Wilhem Bousset, Ulrich Müller).[7] In doing so, they acknowledge his indebtedness to early Jewish apocalyptic conventions and development of biblical traditions. However, a major gap exists in our understanding of how Jewish authors from this period (and their respective communities) employed and appropriated universal biblical traditions regarding the fate of the nations. The book of Revelation has not yet been adequately

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[5] This is the view of commentators such as Caird, Sweet, and Bauckham, see below Chapter 2 (2.3; 2.5).

[6] Bauckham, *Climax*, xvi.

[7] A general pattern emerges where commentators who employ source-critical methods are more inclined to acknowledge the influence of Jewish apocalyptic thought upon the author. A common position among mainstream commentators is that of Jürgen Roloff (*Revelation* [Translated by John E. Alsup; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993], 2-8), who recognizes the apocalyptic character of the prophetic visions but emphasizes the epistolary form (more continuity with early Christian writers than early Jewish literature).

located within its tradition-historical context in this particular case. Second, in spite of numerous suggestions regarding the structure of John's Apocalypse, little attention has been given to how the problem at hand may be related to its structure. The result is that commentators have generally not attempted to place those individual texts and traditions that employ universal language within an overall framework of the document's 'narrative trajectory.' Finally, very few commentators have paid adequate attention to the tension between demands placed on Christians to be faithful and eschatological visions that include the nations. Generally speaking, the most judicious treatments of the subject emphasize the rhetorical function of both sides of this tension in their unresolved state. However, it is not immediately clear whether such a solution reflects the intent of the author or whether it is partly the product of (post) modern sensitivities to the difficulties of Revelation's dark images of judgment.[8]

There is therefore a fundamental need to locate the communicative strategy of Revelation, which appears to encourage this tension, within the Jewish apocalyptic literary milieu. To what extent might Revelation share interpretive strategies and common reception of biblical traditions regarding the fate of the nations with other documents from the 2TP?[9] Where, if at all, do such similarities break down? This study insists that the way forward is by comparing the ways in which biblical traditions are used to construct and deploy inclusive rhetoric common to apocalyptic thought. Several further questions then emerge: In what way does Revelation's overall narrative trajectory delimit the way its use of these individual traditions is to be understood? How might the author have expected his inclusion of these traditions to motivate his readers to greater faithfulness? It is to the answer of these questions that the focus of the present study will be given.

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[8] In raising this critique I am aware that deeper complexities regarding post-modern thought exist but the limitations of this study do not allow full exploration. I simply observe that the author and audience of the Apocalypse – indeed readers of Revelation until the Enlightenment – would simply not have brought these kinds of sensitivities to the text.

[9] Bauckham's emphasis on the role of OT prophetic models and John's own exegesis of the Hebrew Scriptures is both insightful and a corrective to simplistic caricatures of his prophetic roots. However, one must search further and investigate what the ramifications might be if similar language and eschatological expectation regarding the nations is to be found elsewhere in the literary world contemporary to John.

1.4 Method and Assumptions

The purpose of this study is to evaluate and compare a selection of documents from early Judaism alongside John's Apocalypse. Four documents from the 2TP have been chosen: Tobit, the *Similitudes of Enoch* (*1 Enoch* 37-71), 4 Ezra, and the *Animal Apocalypse* (*1 Enoch* 85-90). Like Revelation, each of these documents contains texts that are narrow and exclusive; yet their eschatological visions also include universal language. Do they exhibit similar interpretive strategies and narrative tension regarding the fate of the nations to what we find in Revelation?[10] Taking these writings seriously on their own terms is crucial to reconstructing the literary and conceptual matrix of apocalyptic thought in the 2TP. Authors contemporary to John sought answers to similar issues and employed common strategies for attempting to find their resolution. A comparative reading of these documents is proposed on two levels: (a) at the 'micro' level we can observe the conventions of literary context and narrative development in a document (literary-narrative criticism); and, (b) at the 'macro' level the narrative function and theological rationale of biblical traditions is sought (tradition-historical criticism). Revelation, both in its narrative development and appropriation of biblical traditions, cannot adequately be understood apart from an awareness of this literary milieu.[11]

Literary-Narrative Criticism

Through critical evaluation of these documents, some patterns emerge regarding how early Jewish conceptions of the eschatological fate of the Gentile nations developed. This allows us to identify what, if any, influence they may have on our reading of Revelation. Conversely, in each respective document, features unique to that author and his agenda will become all the more evident. Analysis of each document will begin with a "literary-sequential" critical reading – an adaptation of both literary and narrative critical

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[10] This criterion for the selection and evaluation of early Jewish documents necessarily leaves other primary sources in the background. These include especially material from the Dead Sea Scrolls attributable to the Essene community at Qumran and the later witnesses to developing Jewish thought in the Targumim. Reference to these sources is largely anecdotal and appears most prominently in several excursuses later in this study (Chapter 3, *Excursus One*; Chapter 5, *Excursus Four*).

[11] James Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament: Prolegomena for the Study of Christian Origins* (SNTSMS 54; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 87, observed: "Revelation, like Hebrews and James, is profoundly Jewish in thought and imagery...It should also be studied not as the last book in a later defined canon, but as an apocalypse in a continuum of apocalypses..."

methods.[12] Necessarily, a brief description of how the terms 'literary' and 'narrative' are defined and employed in this study is vital; perhaps especially so in light of their application to documents that are predominantly non-narrative in genre.[13] Two related elements of critical evaluation are brought together here to provide a holistic reading of each document: to identify the literary world these authors share and within which each respectively operates; and, to place the overall argument (an author's 'narrative logic') within its larger literary contextual framework.[14] Importantly, this two-fold evaluation is applied equally to both early Jewish and Christian material. Thus the same literary- and narrative-critical questions are asked of, for example, the book of Tobit and the *Animal Apocalypse* (in chap. 3) as of Revelation (chaps 4 and 5). Similarly, the same exegetical criteria used to evaluate certain passages with implications for universal eschatological participation in 4 Ezra are also applied to those passages in Revelation that present similar concerns and features.

To begin we refer to an author's literary world as that complex of influences (literary, theological, social, political) which gives rise to their distinctive perspective and style in writing. Therefore, without attempting to fit Revelation into a predetermined literary mold, this study takes into account that authors from the 2TP were influenced by and contributed to a literary and theological tradition that was neither static nor uniform. It is not possible to demonstrate conclusively that certain authors or religious communities were in direct conversation with one another. Nevertheless, a common pool of traditional sources, interpretive strategies, and literary conventions was obviously

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[12] For a helpful introduction to the relationship between literary criticism and the development of narrative criticism, see Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 1-21. This also explains the emphasis on previous literary-narrative readings of Revelation in the history of research on this subject (Barr, Boring and Thompson). In the case of each, I both borrow and diverge from them in several ways (see the analysis in Chapter 2 [2.4]).

[13] Until recently, narrative criticism was applied exclusively to 'story' elements of the New Testament – i.e. the Gospels and Acts. Thus, this study uses the term 'narrative' for John's Apocalypse much the same way scholars have used it to refer to the overarching thematic construction of, for example, Paul's theology (see Bruce W. Longenecker, "Narrative Interest in the Study of Paul," in *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* [B. Longenecker, ed.; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002], 3-16). For an early identification of the narrative character of John's Apocalypse, see Leonard Thompson, "Cult and Eschatology in the Apocalypse of John," *JR* 49 (1969): 330-350, who at that time described the content of the Apocalypse in two categories "*eschatological narrative* and liturgical recital" (italics mine).

[14] William A. Beardslee, *Literary Criticism of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 2-3.

present in early Judaism and influenced these authors.[15] The likelihood exists that at some level, cross-fertilization of ideas and direct response/polemic existed between early Jewish and Christian authors in the latter half of the first century C.E. and beyond. Thus the literature of the 2TP provides an important nexus of interaction for the exegetical strategies and motivational agenda of John's Apocalypse.

Second, not only do these authors operate within a larger literary world; within the apocalyptic tradition, they each create a particular symbolic world, which their readers are urged to adopt. Moreover, the current circumstances of the audience are re-interpreted and presented as part of a much larger, cosmological reality, the author's 'symbolic universe.'[16] I use the term 'narrative logic' or 'narrative trajectory' of a given document to contend that at some level a unifying literary plot creates a discernable narrative that must be taken seriously.[17] Operating with this assumption demands an awareness of the interplay between two distinct yet related elements of literature: that any individual theme, emphasis or appropriated tradition in a document contributes to *and* is shaped by its larger literary context.[18] The literary integrity of each document in its present form is therefore taken seriously. While assuming a certain 'narrative unity' on behalf of a given document, those instances where questions regarding the possibility of multiple sources, redaction or editing are raised by other critical approaches merit attention. Reasons for such textual uncertainty may in fact reveal the difficulties caused by apparently conflicting traditions within a document (precisely the focus of the present study).

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[15] Much the same may be asserted today without necessarily questioning the creative process of a given author. Leonard Thompson, *The Book of Revelation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 40, illustrates precisely this when he says of the author of Revelation: "Individual creativity as well as precedents in the genre contributed to the creation of this linguistic vision."

[16] Thompson, *Revelation*, 74, recognizes that the terms "literary world" or "symbolic universe" could imply a vision, which is ultimately illusory or detached from the author's (and audience's) present reality. He suggests that Revelation be read as "...an *encompassing* vision that includes everyday, social realities in Asia Minor" (italics his). While I agree with his assessment of the immediacy of the author's literary message, at the same time, John's inclusion of cosmic, mythical, and some temporally distant symbols does create much more than simply a re-interpretation of the audience's present, physical world. On this point, see David L. Barr, "The Apocalypse as Symbolic Transformation of the World: A Literary Analysis," *Int* 38 (1984): 39-50.

[17] Powell, Mark Allan, "Narrative Criticism," in *Hearing the New Testament* (Joel Green, ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 242, "...narrative critics make some assumptions about a normative process of reading. They assume, for instance, that the narrative is to be read sequentially and completely with all its parts being related to the work as a whole."

[18] Powell, "Narrative Criticism," 242-243.

Tradition-Historical Criticism

Following a determination of the narrative trajectory of a given document, the second stage of analysis evaluates the function of biblical traditions in the communicative strategy of the given author. Evidence for this may be seen both through the influence of OT traditions on specific passages, and through patterns of interpretation that emerge in these documents. The result of this investigation will help us: first, to identify and contextualize an author's overall stance toward the nations (against the backdrop of his narrative logic); second, to identify those biblical traditions which informed such perspectives and were held in common by writers in this period; third, to recognize those moments when an author operates independently of widely-held interpretive strategies; fourth, to be aware of the possibility that an author could portray the Gentile nations with apparent inconsistency; and, finally, to determine whether there is evidence of progression or change in the way an author appropriates biblical traditions regarding the Gentiles *within* a document. Such development signals the following possible explanations for tension within a document's narrative logic: either the product of inconsistent thought, textual corruption, intentional framing of the eschatological fate of the nations, or a motivational agenda with a particular message for the faithful.

Taken together, the results of these two stages of analysis provide the basis for synthesizing the evidence from a given document: a clearer picture emerges of what role or fate is assigned to the Gentile nations in the eschatological landscape of the author. Under what circumstances, if at all, does the author envision the nations being present in the eschatological future? What does the rhetorical/motivational purpose appear to be for such inclusion where it does exist? Can one suggest that the author assigns any responsibility or credit to the righteous or faithful as a way of explaining the presence of the Gentiles in the future kingdom? Such questions must be asked of these apocalyptically oriented documents in order to set a frame of reference for similar questions, which this study seeks to ask of Revelation.

1.5 Description of the Thesis

Following this introduction, a history of research in Chapter 2 reviews previous scholarship according to the classification outlined above (1.2). Next Chapter 3

investigates the narrative trajectories and logical tensions regarding eschatological status of the nations in particularly relevant early Jewish literature. From that discussion the book of Revelation is evaluated in two chapters. Chapter 4 provides an overview of key preliminary issues: a critique of Bauckham's thesis; the questions of genre and structure as they relate to this study; as well as a proposal for the book's overall narrative trajectory. In a larger section, Chapter 5 then presents a close exegetical and literary-sequential examination of the relevant texts that reflect the tension between particularistic rhetoric and inclusive eschatological depictions of the Gentiles. This chapter is organized to reflect the importance in this discussion of the author's use of epithets and labels for the various participants in his visions. Finally, Chapter 6 provides concluding observations based on the evaluations of both the early Jewish literature and the Apocalypse. Suggestions are made regarding points of contact and continuity between these apocalyptic documents, as well as ways in which this presentation of John's visions of the eschatological fate of earth's inhabitants breaks new academic ground.

CHAPTER TWO:

History of Interpretation

2.1 Introduction

A following history of interpretation surveys how scholars have treated the notion of the conversion of the nations in Revelation. In selecting the secondary literature for discussion, I have adopted two criteria: (1) when a publication has achieved a large degree of consensus as being influential and ground-breaking in the broader context of study in Revelation; and, (2) when a work, as a result of its conclusions on the particular issue at hand, helps to fill out the widest possible range of interpretations for the benefit of the present study. Special attention is given to ways in which commentators have identified the influence of biblical traditions upon apocalyptic thought and handled the critical texts in question. The survey is divided into four sections: late 19th and 20th century source-critics and major theories of text composition; mainstream commentators from the 20th century representing a wide spectrum of opinion on the present subject; later 20th century literary-narrative critics; and finally, a detailed review of Richard Bauckham's proposal in light of its particular interest to the present study.

2.2 Source Critics and Revelation

The late 19th and early 20th centuries witnessed the influence of source criticism upon the study of Revelation (as with the NT as a whole). This method emphasizes a reconstruction of the various traditions, fragments and subsequent editors, which are thought to lie behind the final (present) form of John's Apocalypse. Underlying the work of source critics is the common assumption that abrupt thematic changes, varying patterns of word usage, and seemingly irreconcilable theological tensions must signal complex composition. The two most common solutions tend to be either movement from one source to another by an author shaping them for his own purpose, or the later interpolation of an editor (redactor) attempting to impose his own concerns upon the previously composed text. While the final decisions on the identity of sources and the results of each source critic's own reconstructions differ from the others, their general agreement on the passages which raise the most questions regarding 'source-critical problems' is an important signal for the present study. Repeatedly, the conflicting

language in Revelation regarding the fate of the nations figures prominently in source critics' attempts to discern the various *Quellen*.

Three preliminary observations can be made with respect to how source critics interpreted universal language in Revelation with reference to earth's peoples. First, references to those who have been redeemed by the Lamb "*from every tribe and language and people and nation*" (5.9; 7.9) were consistently thought to represent a Christian source – whether from the author's own hand or borrowed by him from an older Christian tradition. Second, by contrast a significant number of passages in Revelation refer polemically to the nations of the world – as the opponents of those who follow the Lamb. In these instances source critics, noting the influence of Jewish apocalyptic thought, attributed such material to Jewish sources that (in varying degrees) were used and modified to suit the author's purpose. Finally, the predisposition to read these various sources behind Revelation precisely at the point of this type of language produces radical divisions and re-ordering of the text in an attempt to reconstruct the author's chronology of eschatological expectation.

2.2.1 Wilhem Bousset

The 1906 commentary by Wilhem Bousset on Revelation[1] represents not only a thorough expression of the source-critical method; it still serves as a helpful survey of the lively discussion among German scholars at the turn of the 20th century regarding the various *Quellen* thought to account for the content of Revelation. His commentary's introduction illustrates how wide-ranging the opinions of scholars were concerning the identity of the sources. The works of Völter (1904) and Erbes (1891) represented an approach that assumed largely Christian apocalyptic origins for various segments of the text. They classified and catalogued fragments according to the eras of certain Roman emperors (mostly Caligula, Nero, Trajan and Hadrian) in which they were most likely composed. Several theories, especially those of Spitta (1889) and Wenlands (1886), proposed the strong influence of several distinct Jewish sources, which were then reshaped by a Christian redactor and a final editor (*Überarbeiter*). Bousset's own work

[1] Wilhem Bousset, *Die Offenbarung Johannis* (neubearb. Auflage, 1906; Göttigen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1906; repr., 1966).

built upon the source reconstructions and conclusions of Weizsäcker, Sabatier and Schon. Distinctive of his approach was a concerted effort to take seriously the influence both of inherited Jewish traditions and uniquely Christian thinking.

Unlike some of his source-critical contemporaries, Bousset proposed that, whatever sources may have been employed, a unified theme could be discerned in the final form of the Apocalypse. He observed that the common characteristic binding together all the various source fragments was the ongoing struggle (tension) between the Roman Empire and the people of God (in Revelation, the Church).[2] In the hand of the author, Bousset argued that these various traditions served the greater purpose of articulating the plight of the Lamb's followers. How this thematic framework shaped Bousset's interpretation of the destiny of the nations may be illustrated with several tendencies: (1) passages that deal with the fate of the nations are consistently described as the most difficult and awkward to reconcile; (2) images of judgment tend to reflect Jewish apocalyptic thought while scenes of universal salvation are the product of Christian theology; and, (3) positive biblical traditions regarding the nations are understood either as peripheral strands of tradition, misplaced sources, valuable "aesthetic" traditions, or are to be interpreted in an inverted sense.

The notion of an 'inverted hermeneutic' is apparent in Bousset's comments on John's vision of the parousia (1.7). For him this text reverses the largely positive expression of its biblical tradition (cf. Zech 12.10) and presumes the fate of earth's tribes to be negative.[3] This marks the beginning of what for Bousset is a polemic in Revelation against the Church's antagonists (Jewish and pagan) couched in universal terminology. In the messages to the seven churches (specifically Thyatira and Philadelphia), he finds this polemic expressed in promises to the faithful (2.26; 3.9).[4] This becomes even stronger in the opening of the fifth and sixth seals (6.9-17) where the cries for justice by the martyrs

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[2] Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 130.

[3] Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 190, "Der Spruch, der im alten Testament einen *friedlichen Sinn* hatte und von der Busse des Volkes weissagt, ist nach der Auffassung der Apokalypter gerade *ein Spruch des Gerichts und Verderbens*, und zwar wird das Gericht über zweierlei Klassen von Menschen ergehen: Es werden ihn sehen, die ihn durchbohrt haben, das heißt die Juden, und *alle Geschlechter der Erde*, das heißt *die ungläubigen Heiden*" (italics mine).

[4] Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 226-227, denies that the "open door" promised to the believers (3.8) refers either to the evangelistic mission of the Church or repentance on the part of its opponents; rather the community's entry into the messianic kingdom – a thoroughly Jewish eschatological category – is envisioned.

and the subsequent doom of the opponents of the people of God are depicted.[5] He articulates the discomfort many commentators express with this "highly problematic passage" because of its apparently uncharitable character. A prayer that evokes both hatred and hope with such a strong mood of vengeance (*Rachestimmung*) is best understood to come from a Jewish source.[6] This is also the explanation given for the two visions of the redeemed in Revelation 7 where it becomes clear that, for Bousset, the author is not only a Jewish Christian, he also carries strong nationalistic hopes. The 144,000 sealed servants of God are understood as Jews who follow the Lamb (7.1-8) while the great multitude before the throne (7.9-17) – representative of the Gentile mission of the Church – reveals the author to be "ein überzeugter Universalist."[7]

A further characteristic of Bousset's treatment of passages with positive universal language is his view that they represent attempts to balance scenes of judgment. This is apparent in his discussion of 15.2-4 where he describes the hymn celebrating global worship of God as an insertion to counteract the violent language of 14.6-20.[8] In 14.1-5 he links the vision of the 144,000 with 7.1-8 as a picture of Jewish Christians. Where the latter text described their sealing by God, 14.1-5 portrays their victorious triumph of righteous resistance "hier schon erettet." This group stands as "Gegensatz zu den Tieranbeter" (the inhabitants of the earth who worshipped the beast in 13.12,14,16). That this is not a 'final future' scene is indicated for Bousset by their present description as those who "follow the Lamb."[9] Several points in Bousset's discussion of 14.6-13 make it significant for the present study. The vision of the angel bearing the eternal gospel (14.6-7) represents a genuine message with universal implications. As a direct antithesis to the woe pronounced upon the inhabitants of the earth (8.13) this proclamation serves as an invitation in the form of warning.[10] Alongside this universal invitation, Bousset understands 14.9-12 not as descriptive of the fate of unbelievers but rather, as a

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[5] Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 271, observes "'Die Erdbewohner' ist ein in der Apokalyptisch häufig wiederkehrender Ausdruck, der gewöhnlich die übrigen Menschen im Gegensatz zu den Knechten Gottes bezeichnet."

[6] Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 271, also sees strong ties to the Jewish source behind this prayer in 4 Ezra 4.35; *1En.* 47.2.

[7] Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 289, where *Universalist* refers to the global character of the believing community.

[8] Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 394.

[9] Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 381.

[10] Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 384.

specifically strict admonition to the faithful (insiders) regarding the consequences of relations with the beast (the Empire).[11]

The final vision of the New Jerusalem is, according to Bousset, a prime illustration of misplaced traditions. With its mixture of strict and universal images this vision is intended primarily for the believing community, as demonstrated by the intertwining of blessings in the new aeon with reminders to ethical purity (21.5-8). Significantly, listed first among the condemned are cowards – whom Bousset calls "die Feigen Christen"[12] – in other words, insiders. He suggests that reading ἀπίστοι as "the unfaithful" most likely supports this reading but could also refer to unbelievers in a wider sense. Bousset classifies 21.1-8 as *Lichtbild*[13] along with virtually every major passage significant for evaluating universal language in Revelation.[14] The description of the New Jerusalem, which follows 21.1-8, causes Bousset (so most source-critics) great difficulty. Revelation 21.24-27 simply does not fit what preceded it – a heavenly Jerusalem that is 'all in all.' Since it features Gentile nations and kings living outside the city it must, according to Bousset, represent a remaining "archaic feature" of an older source that was originally devoted to an earthly, renewed Jerusalem.[15] Likewise 22.2 is a misfit "Stück" incompatible with the heavenly Jerusalem. Both 21.24-27 and 22.2 are examples of an "impure logical thread" – a development that no reader could logically have anticipated following the vision in 21.1-8.[16] Bousset points to the parallels between 21.6-8 and 22.13-16 as proof that the vision of the heavenly Jerusalem was interrupted by the ill-fitting description of a renewed earthly Jerusalem.[17]

Regarding Revelation 10.1-11.13 Bousset posits Jewish traditions as the explanation for judgment motifs. Thus John, dependent on an older apocalyptic source,

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[11] Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 386.
[12] Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 445.
[13] Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 445-446, "Gegenstuck zu den vorhergehenden furchtbaren oder doch ernsten Gerichtsszenen."
[14] Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 445-446, where he includes 7.1-8; 7.9-17; 14.1-5; 15.2-4; 19.1-9.
[15] Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 451.
[16] Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 454, "Der Widerspruch in den Vorstellungen ist so hart, das der verweis auf die alttestamentlichen Parallelen und die Annahme der Abhängigkeit des Apokalypter von diesen kaum zur Erklärung ausreicht."
[17] Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 458.

awkwardly abandons it through the literary feature of sealing up the seven thunders.[18] In what remains, however, Bousset recognizes the description of God as Creator (10.6) as characteristic of later Jewish apocalyptic literature and yet, by contrast, very infrequent in the NT outside Revelation. This way of speaking about God has implications for the issues of the redemption and judgment of the nations in the following visions. Bousset associates the "mystery of God" (10.7) and the sweet taste of the scroll (10.11) with the fall of the Dragon (12.1f), while the scroll's bitter element represents the ultimate destiny of the inhabitants of the earth who are opposed to God and his people.[19] In the vision of the two witnesses (11.3-13), the use of two different idioms (11.9: four-fold formula; 11.10: inhabitants of earth) for those affected by the witnesses puzzles Bousset. He suggests that the first term refers specifically to a cross-section of Jerusalemites – possibly including the besieging hordes. The second term, while perhaps more localized in its original source setting, becomes the collective response of the world to the news of the witnesses' demise.[20] In this way, Bousset maintains his apocalyptic definition of *Erdbewohner*. He further admits that the mission of the two witnesses is met with some positive response (in contrast to the blasphemous rejection in 9.21; 16.9). Citing an original Jewish source setting, which cast the Beast (as "half-Jewish" ruler) against the Jews, this act of fearing God is the response of Jews at the intervention of God through the earthquake. Therefore, Bousset simply does not see universal implications here. The marks of Jewish apocalyptic are woven so deeply that the only option for John is simply to rework this to refer to Jewish Christians. Bousset therefore does not find any connection between those who were terrified (ἔμφοβος) in 11.13 and those who fear God's name in 11.18 (φοβέομαι) because they represent distinct sources. He sees no reason to understand any Jewish source influence on 11.15-19.

In summary, how Bousset understood the influence of Jewish apocalyptic sources in Revelation may be illustrated once more in his discussions of the two scenes of eschatological harvest in 14.14-20 (based on Joel 3.13). He suggests that, in light of the context in Joel, these two scenes do not reflect positive "harvest terminology" elsewhere

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[18] Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 309, rejects the common source-critical view (especially Völter) that 10.1-11.13 originally functioned as an "appendix," which was misplaced by a later redactor.
[19] Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 312.
[20] Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 322-323.

in the NT (Matt 9.37; Jn 4.35) but simply depict judgment and annihilation. The violent language in these scenes leads him to conclude that this was an obviously Jewish fragment that originally served as a scene of the final judgment at the end of an older apocalypse. Further, against other source-critics he rejects that this was once the finale of a pre-redactor form of Revelation.[21] Here the fragment was reduced to the role of preliminary judgment, which explains for him how a 'son of man figure' (14.14) could be placed on equal footing with an angelic figure (14.17). Most importantly, its thematic connections with 11.3-13 suggest the possibility of a common *Quelle* and a relationship with 7.1-8 and 14.1-3. This identification, while unsustainable, nevertheless illustrates the thoroughgoing affinity of Revelation with early Jewish apocalyptic thought and the important contributions of Bousset to our understanding of the Apocalypse.

2.2.2 R.H. Charles

Few English-speaking scholars have cast as large a shadow upon the study of Revelation as R.H. Charles.[22] In particular, his ongoing influence is felt in two important ways: First, his extensive linguistic analysis, reconstruction of John's peculiar use of Greek grammar, and awareness of historical context continue to shape the study of Revelation. Second, his blunt and often severe commitment to reading Revelation from a source-critical perspective earned him the reputation as a "surgeon."[23] The reader quickly becomes aware that Charles' tone is at once highly reverential for what he regards to be the genuine apocalypse of John the seer, while equally disdainful in his critique against a later redactor.

Like his German counterparts, Charles understood the composition of Revelation to include visions original to John the seer, as well as material from Jewish and Christian apocalyptic sources (especially of Neronic and Vespasianic dates). What set Charles apart to some degree was his own hypothesis that significant intrusions and corruptions (both in linguistic style and subject matter) had invaded the text through the "unhappy and

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[21] Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 391, where he cites Völter, Erbes, and J. Weiz.
[22] R.H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1920).
[23] See G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (London: A & C Black, 1966), 143.

unintelligent" work of a redactor/editor.[24] This editor was one who was closely connected to John either as a disciple or contemporary, but who completely misunderstood his agenda. The evidence that Charles cites for this appears in the form of revisions, interpolations and rearrangements of the text, and is based on the criteria of his own linguistic analysis.[25] Charles goes so far as to provide a grammar tailored specifically to the 'Johannine Greek' of Revelation and dismisses other interpretive approaches that fail to recognize the work of the redactor's hand as he himself does.[26] Once Charles 'corrects' the editor's work, he discerns a two-fold purpose for the apocalypse: to encourage faithful believers to resist even to death the blasphemous claims of the Empire; and, to proclaim the coming victory of God.

In three ways Charles' work has a bearing on any discussion of the fate of the nations in Revelation. To begin there is striking consistency with which he classifies almost every passage that addresses this subject. Note the following: passages based on outside Jewish sources (7.1-8; 11.1-13); and, passages that contain major editorial corruptions (14.3-4,14-20; 15.2-4; 20.4-22.2). Second, Charles developed those conclusions by attempting to demonstrate that the material of the apocalypse – once corrected by his 'restoration' – follows a straightforward chronological order. The exceptions to this are "certain proleptic visions, which are inserted for purposes of encouragement and lie outside the orderly development of the theme of the seer."[27] Of crucial importance to the present study is the fact that these proleptic visions include passages with universal language. These prolepses (forward-looking visions) are found in 7.9-17; 10.1-11.13; 14.1-20, and uniquely so in 12.1-17, where the vision of the woman and the Dragon actually looks back on past events in order to prepare for the beast visions of chapter 13.[28] Third, as he discusses the unity of the 'restored' text of Revelation, Charles notes several 'smaller unities' – one of which he terms "...the re-evangelization of the heathen world..." In this regard he cites 11.15; 14.6-7; 15.4 as being "fulfilled in 21.9-22.2,14-15,17 when it has been restored to its rightful place immediately after

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[24] Charles, *Revelation*, 1:l-lv.
[25] Charles, *Revelation*, i.
[26] Charles, *Revelation*, xxiii
[27] Charles, *Revelation*, xxiii
[28] Charles, *Revelation*, xxv.

20.3."[29] By removing 21.7-8 from the description of the New Jerusalem, Charles effectively removes the need to reconcile the tension created by the presence of both strict and universal language and images in the same context. Consequently, his conception of the re-evangelisation of the world is not nearly as sweeping or global as some other commentators suggest (see below).[30]

2.2.3 Josephine Massyngberde-Ford

In her self-proclaimed "provocative" and "individual" commentary,[31] Josephine Massyngberde-Ford presents a unique source-critical reading of the Apocalypse – a thesis she did not expect to be widely accepted. Nevertheless, her treatment of passages with universal language further demonstrates their difficulty. While her reconstruction of sources and structural outline are somewhat simpler than those of either Charles or Bousset, Massyngberde-Ford's theories regarding authorship, origin of sources, and final redaction require attention. She describes Revelation as an essentially Jewish apocalypse with some evidence of Christian interpolation and editing. The sources Massyngberde-Ford identifies all assume some relationship to John the Baptist, whom she understands to be "John" in Revelation. In her view, John the Baptist himself initially produced the apocalyptic visions of chapters 4-11 at a time when he was unsure of Jesus' messianic identity.[32] A subsequent disciple(s) of the Baptist, who may or may not have been a Christian, then produced the material of chapters 12-22 (with some obviously Christian interpolations in the last chapter).[33] Finally, chapters 1-3, 22.16a,20b,21 were the work of a later Jewish Christian disciple.[34] In this final stage the already existing material was re-

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[29] Charles, *Revelation*, lxxxvii-lxxxviii.
[30] See below the reviews of G.B. Caird, John Sweet and Richard Bauckham.
[31] Josephine Massyngberde-Ford, *Revelation* (AB 38; Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1975).
[32] Massyngberde-Ford, *Revelation*, 3-4, dates this earliest section of Revelation to the early 30s C.E.
[33] As a critique of their fellow Jews, these visions identify Jerusalem as the 'Babylon' of chaps 17-18, and prophetically anticipate its fall at the hands of Rome (67-70 C.E.) from the time of the mid-60s C.E. Later on, Massyngberde-Ford actually suggests the possibility that the "conflicting" descriptions of the New Jerusalem in Rev 21-22 betray more than one source (see below).
[34] She suggests someone like Apollos (Acts 18) or the Baptist's own disciples in Ephesus (Acts 19).

edited in order to "Christianize" the document.[35] This chronology of composition determines the outline of her commentary.

Several observations may be made in light of Massyngberde-Ford's predilection to read Revelation as a primarily Jewish document. First, she finds a much more polemical stance against "outsiders" – both Gentiles and unfaithful Jews alike. Revelation is characterized by a Jewish theology of the remnant that holds no hope for the Gentile nations and refuses to tolerate accommodation to the Gentile world by many Jews. From this view the two scrolls (5.2; 10.2) hold nationalistic or community significance as warnings against idolatry (i.e. participation in Empire) rather than any universal implication.[36] In the vision of the two witnesses (11.3-13), all referents are entirely Jewish: the house of Aaron (priesthood) and the house of Israel (laity) are prophetic voices to Jews in Palestine. She does not address how the response of those who witnessed the resurrection of the witnesses and the earthquake – "fearing God and giving him glory" – is to be understood. The following hymn of 11.15-19 provides a picture of universal judgment where the wicked who are condemned are the nations of the world.[37] Further, she points out that in the hymn of 15.2-4 "One notes the element of fear, rather than love, of God," and reference to righteous acts "appears to refer to divine judgments and condemnation."[38]

Second, by associating the Baptist's community with the world-view and theological ideas found at Qumran, Massyngberde-Ford makes extensive reference to connections between Revelation and Qumran documents. Priority of place goes to 1QM (*War Scroll*) with its vision of the "sons of light" battling the "sons of darkness." She asserts that the messianic figure in Revelation contains significant parallels to the "Prince of Lights" figure of 1QM.[39] Some clarification on her understanding of the global language in Revelation comes in the discussion of "those who dwell on earth" in 6.11.

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[35] Massyngberde-Ford, *Revelation*, 3, argues that in light of the serious mood of the letters to the churches, "(he) still retains the pessimistic outlook of their former master."

[36] Massyngberde-Ford, *Revelation*, 93. For 5.2 she suggests the scroll most likely represents a "bill of divorce" in light of similarities in rabbinic usage and the bride/adulteress motifs in Revelation. The little (sweet/bitter) scroll in 10.13 represents the trial by bitter water (Num 5.19-22) of an adulterous woman (*Revelation*, 163-165).

[37] Massyngberde-Ford, *Revelation*, 182.

[38] Massyngberde-Ford, *Revelation*, 257.

[39] Massyngberde-Ford, *Revelation*, 53,161,163.

Here she follows Minear who states that these are in fact the "beast worshippers." He further suggests that the phrase intrinsically implies those who are opposed to the faithful – "earth" is seen to be a common denominator for all "antichristic forces."[40] In 7.9-17, the great multitude gathered before the throne is identified by Massyngberde-Ford as the ingathered Jewish exiles but she allows "the idea that the great crowd refers to an ingathering of exiles does not necessarily preclude universalism: a theology of remnant had room for Gentiles."[41]

As with both Bousset and Charles, Revelation's final chapters present significant difficulties for Massyngberde-Ford regarding the presence and textual order of two distinct descriptions of the New Jerusalem – one earthly (21.9-27; 21.8; 22.2), the other heavenly (21.1-7; 22.3-5). She recognizes that beyond the obvious spatial and temporal concerns, these visions of the New Jerusalem also contain thematic tensions. On the one hand, the nations and kings of the earth participate in the life of the New Jerusalem (21.24-27; 22.2), while on the other hand there is a clearly defined standard, which excludes certain behaviour from entry into the New Jerusalem. Massyngberde-Ford's solution is to understand the earthly Jerusalem references in connection with the 'millennium' scene (20.1-6) and conclude that the former are chronologically misplaced in the text. She suggests that they should actually precede 21.1-7. In doing so, she follows source-critical approaches generally (see Bousset and Charles above) and P. Gaechter specifically.[42] A final observation can be made here related to the tension created by universal language: every detail which contributes to the tension – strict requirements of the faithful (21.8); participation of nations and kings (21.24,26); healing of the nations (22.2) – is situated by Massyngberde-Ford in the sphere of the earthly New Jerusalem. Thus, she maintains that this language can finally be said to *not* be entirely 'universal' since, for her, the earthly New Jerusalem still awaits the final, heavenly New Jerusalem.

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[40] Massyngberde-Ford, *Revelation*, 100, where she cites Minear (*I Saw a New Heaven*, 261-269).
[41] Massyngberde-Ford, *Revelation*, 126.
[42] Massyngberde-Ford, *Revelation*, 38-39, where she presents a comparative chart of both Charles' and Gaechter's reconstructions of Rev 20-22 and opts for the latter in her own commentary.

2.2.4 Ulrich B. Müller

The recent German commentary by Ulrich Müller[43] defends an essentially unified reading of the text and incorporates features of the source-critical method from a more measured perspective.[44] In the final analysis he allows for a different source behind chapters 11-12, along with several smaller fragments. With the concerns of the present study in focus, the following features of his work are significant: first, the influence of apocalyptic thought and prophetic calling on John's self-understanding and compositional technique; second, the structural analysis which Müller understands as consistent movement toward both judgment and salvation; third, the eschatological, ethical and 'ultimate justice' implications of John's theological perspective; fourth, his discussion of the relationship between 9.20-21; 11.13; and 16.9-11 as consistent characterizations of the inhabitants of the earth as ultimately unrepentant; and finally, commentary specific to three particularly relevant texts.

On the question of which traditions most influenced the composition of the Apocalypse Müller answers: "...der Seher Johannes, der manche apokalyptischen Stilmittel benützt, ist vor allem Prophet."[45] While he still refers to the material of 4.1-22.5 as apocalyptic visions, he ultimately subordinates the apocalyptic features to prophetic identity. The feature of an epistolary framework for the visionary material is otherwise unknown in Jewish apocalyptic traditions. Müller suggests that John's physical separation from the churches required a form (letter) to communicate what would otherwise have been oral prophetic communication had he been present.[46]

Müller's structure and outline follows the three-fold approach of Bousset, Charles and Lohse based on 1.19 ἃ εἶδες καὶ ἃ εἰσιν καὶ ἃ μέλλει γενέσθαι. This reading understands 1.1-20 to represent what "was," 2.1-3.21 to represent what "is" and 4.1ff to describe what "is to come." He rejects Caird and Beckwith's suggestion that 1.19 refers to the whole content of Revelation by pointing out that 4.1 contains a recurrence of the voice from heaven, a heavenly journey by John, and the repetition of ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι.

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[43] Ulrich B. Müller, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes* (2., durchgesehene und ergänzte Auflage, Gütersloh und Echter Verlag: Würzburg, 1995).
[44] Müller, *Offenbarung*, 39, follows Bultmann's assessment: "Mir scheint es methodische geboten zu sein, für die Analyse der Apk mit schriftlichen Quellen zu rechnen, freilich ohne die Zuversicht, daß wir sicher rekonstruieren können."
[45] Müller, *Offenbarung*, 27.
[46] Müller, *Offenbarung*, 28.

The sealed scroll in 5.1-6 determines this overall structure: "Dieses Buch enthält den entzeitlichen Geschichtsplan Gottes über die Welt...die Durchführung des Gerichts an der gottlosen Welt wie die Erlösung der Heilsgemeinde umfaßt.[47] Müller highlights the cycles of 'sevens' within the structure of the Apocalypse, which move the whole scheme toward such a dual eschatological conclusion. They essentially cover the same territory but in a progressive, intensifying way. The point of the increasing complexity of these cycles is to demonstrate the ultimately unrepentant stance of the earth-dwellers.[48] According to Müller this type of spiraling structure is without parallel among the apocalyptic traditions and John's ability to reach the "End" several times reflects his unique eschatological perspective.

In this regard structure reflects theology – a theology with a dual soteriological (salvation/judgment) and temporal (already/not yet) perspective.[49] Müller suggests that in contrast with the Jewish apocalyptic worldview of a succession of world empires, John was completely reoriented by the resurrection of Jesus as the signal of the in-breaking Kingdom of God. *Weltgeschichte* was on the verge of consummation. Thus John operated within a dual eschatological perspective of God's purposes that he wove into the fabric of his visions – a determinative theological framework. Participation by Christians in Asia Minor in the eschatological reality of salvation and vindication is achieved through their ability to overcome – to maintain identity over against the pagan Empire and its temptations.[50]

Müller recognizes that if Revelation is to have a unified dual eschatological vision as described above, there must be a way of reconciling the seemingly contrary evidence of 11.13 and 14.6-7. In the case of 11.1-13, Müller admits this to be one of the "dunkelsten Stücken" of Revelation. He follows previous source-critics in identifying

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[47] Müller, *Offenbarung*, 32.
[48] Müller, *Offenbarung*, 36, states "Die trotz des vernichtenden Strafgerichts an einem Teil der Menschheit nicht zur Umkehr gelangen... Damit aber ist gezeigt, daß die Vernichtung der gottlosen Welt unausweichlich und der Schrie nach dem göttlichen Gericht gerechtfertigt ist..."
[49] Müller, *Offenbarung*, 59, "Der Aufblick in die himmlische Welt, die der Seher Johannes seinen Gemeinden durch seine Visionsberichte vermittelt, schafft ihnen die Gewissheit, daß der Gericht an der gottlosen Welt bereits im Gang ist und das Heil für die Gläubigen nicht verzeiht."
[50] Müller, *Offenbarung*, 60, "Der Seher fordert die strikte Abgrenzung gegenuber den Verfuhrungen der antiken Umwelt. Nur so wird es möglich, >>die Werke<< zu erfüllen, die vor Gott notwendig sind...Das Ideal ist die reine, unbefleckte Heilsgemeinde...die sich von der gottlosen, zum Untergang verdammten Welt absondert."

11.1-2 as "ein ursprüngliches zelotisches Orakel" and positing that in 11.3-13 "der Verfasser mit vorgegebener Überlieferung arbeitet."[51] However, his line of argument is somewhat original in that he does not view the response of the remaining earth-dwellers in 11.13 as the point of the passage. In spite of their earlier appearance in other contexts, Müller argues that both sources here together serve the same unified purpose: to answer the question from 6.17 "Who can stand?" This question, first answered in 7.1-8 by the vision of the sealed 144,000, is answered once again by the two visions in 11.1-13 where that same theme is expanded. By understanding the mission of the two witnesses to reflect the ultimate eschatological plan of God (found in the seven-sealed scroll of 5.1-6), Müller maintains that their message is not a call to repentance.[52] He suggests that the overcoming nature of the two witnesses' mission – evidenced by their public resurrection and vindication – is the primary interest of John. The scene in 11.13 is simply a report of the result of their supernatural vindication. Müller's conclusion is to suggest that the language of 11.13 – in light of the intentional contrast by John between the initial revelry and final terrified state – "sagt hier nicht ihre Bekehrung aus."[53] Thus Müller maintains conceptual continuity with the related visions of 'earth-dweller response' and their impending judgment in 9.20-21 and 16.9-11. These three passages are often understood to underscore the tension that exists between visions of the ultimately unrepentant stance of the nations, and visions of ultimate conversion of the nations. As an important signal for the present study, such a tension simply does not exist among these passages from Muller's perspective.[54]

Müller reaches similar conclusions at several other points in his commentary. His treatment of the vision of the angelic proclamation of an eternal gospel in 14.6-7 is determined by two crucial phrases: his understanding of "die Erdbewohner" as consistently referring to the sinful world and its inhabitants; and, his characterization of the non-christological nature of εὐαγγέλιον as a common Jewish expression of various

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[51] Müller, *Offenbarung*, 208.
[52] Müller, *Offenbarung*, 209, "Jedenfalls wird ihre Botschaft nicht als Busspredigt charakterisiert (z.B. Bousset, Lohmeyer, Wikenhauser, Lohse)."
[53] Müller, *Offenbarung*, 216.
[54] See Müller, *Offenbarung*, 205-218, for his entire argumentation on 11.1-13.

modes of mediated messages – either angelic or prophetic.[55] On the hymn of praise to God as sovereign King and Judge in 15.2-4, he remarks "Die umfassende Herrscherstellung Gottes zwingt die Welt zur Anerkennung ... Die Völker werden Gottes Gerichtshandeln als gerecht anerkennen müssen."[56]

The appearance of the New Jerusalem in 21.24-22.2, with its apparent inclusion of the previously polemicized nations and kings, is the final place where Müller's work is significant. First, as with many commentators who attempt to downplay the presence of seemingly conflicting images, he recognizes that some incongruities must be dealt with in this passage. The presence of nations and kings is explained as no longer an actual reality but rather the remainder of a re-worked tradition.[57] Second, Müller offers the observation that the literary and theological context of the passage actually determines who the citizens of this city could be. The mention of nations in 21.24, 26 and 22.2 is qualified by the criterion in 21.27 of having one's name written in the Lamb's book of life. From this perspective then he draws the conclusion that the nations and kings in 21-22 can only refer to the one people of God – Jew and Gentile – who together have been redeemed "out of every tribe and language and people and nation"(5.9; 7.9).[58]

2.3 Mainstream Commentators on Revelation

A wide-ranging spectrum of opinion on the issue of the fate of nations in the Apocalypse can be demonstrated among those scholars who follow the traditional historical-critical method of reading the biblical text. Martin Kiddle and Robert Mounce are representative of the view that Revelation envisions the nations of the world – as opponents of God and his people – to be destined for inescapable judgment. On the other hand, George Caird and John Sweet advocate that universally inclusive language with respect to the nations redefines what it means for the Lamb to conquer and rule earth's

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[55] Müller, *Offenbarung*, 266-267, where he cites P. Stuhlmacher ("Das paulinische Evangelium, 1. Vorgeschichte" [FRLANT 95, 1968], 210-218) on this second point.
[56] Müller, *Offenbarung*, 274-275.
[57] Müller, *Offenbarung*, 361, "Der Verfasser schildert die eschatologische Zukunft mit Motiven, die aus der Tradition überkommen sind, da die biblischen Verheißungen seiner Phantasie die Möglichkeit geben, das ganze Neue zu denken. Nur so wird es auch verstehbar, daß Vers 24-27 Überlieferungen aufnehmen, die eigentlich nicht zur Schilderung des *himmlischen* Jerusalem passen...sondern in das Bild eines nur *erneuerten* Jerusalem auf dieser Erde zu gehören scheinen."
[58] Müller, *Offenbarung*, 362.

peoples. In doing so they are forerunners of the perspective Bauckham articulates in much greater detail (see 2.5 below). Finally, David Aune provides an approach that attempts to sketch the broad horizon of discussion on the study of Revelation and synthesize the strengths of the various methodologies. His evaluation of the streams of Jewish apocalyptic thought raises important questions for the present study.

2.3.1 Martin Kiddle

As a classic statement of a "judgment-oriented" reading of Revelation, Martin Kiddle's commentary remains a standard.[59] It should be noted that certain factors seem to shape his theologically conservative and ecumenically narrow (exclusivist) approach. He writes as a churchman for the "ordinary audience" bringing to his work significant pastoral concerns.[60] The fact that his commentary was completed and published in the early stages of World War II is also no small circumstantial factor and seems to rise to the surface occasionally. In several ways his perspective is relevant to the present study: Kiddle's understanding of apocalyptic traditions, perspective and rhetoric; the role which his assessment of Revelation's main theme consistently plays in his overall exposition; and, his interpretive commitment to the 'spiritualizing hermeneutic' within which he believes John to be operating.

The influence of apocalyptic traditions on John's shaping of Revelation leads Kiddle to argue that "the writer's interest was strictly pastoral, first and last;...it is remarkable how consistently John adheres to his main pastoral purpose and bends the apocalyptic medium to serve that purpose."[61] Difficulties in interpreting John correctly, according to Kiddle, can be attributed to the tendency of apocalyptic thought to place all hopes in the age to come, rather than the present age. He illustrates this perspective first by insisting that the optimistic "tone" of the early Christian world-view had been muted by crisis and persecution.[62] This understanding of the influence of apocalyptic thought

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[59] Martin Kiddle & M.K. Ross, *The Revelation of St. John* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Limited, 1940).
[60] Both the editor's introduction to The Moffatt New Testament Commentary series and the author's preface make this predisposition clear.
[61] Kiddle, *Revelation*, xvi.
[62] Kiddle, *Revelation*, xxvi-xxvii, "By this time it was insufficient to concentrate attention on certain prophecies which served to confirm the Gospel message...that had sufficed in the early days of the Church's history, when faith was buoyant, and missionary expansion fostered an optimistic enthusiasm. In John's day, that cheerful hopefulness had passed..."

emerges in his comments on the cry for vindication by the martyrs in 6.9-11 when he observes

> ...the passionate longing for vengeance breathed out by the martyrs...is beyond doubt lower in tone than the lofty spirit of forbearance which distinguished the Christian Church in its earliest days. The change is a measure of the transformation wrought in the persecuted by persecution.[63]

Moreover, he charges the influence of apocalyptic with muting missionary zeal – so characteristic of early Christians but now absent in John's visions. This transformation was most apparent in the dualistic tone of 22.11.[64] Here John's view of the end shaped his visions of categorical judgment on all but those faithful to God. According to Kiddle, this sort of pessimism and general antagonism were characteristic of the apocalyptic traditions John relied on.

Kiddle states in no uncertain terms that the main theme of Revelation is the certain, terrible, and final judgment of the Creator upon an unregenerate and rebellious world. To conceive of the coming of God's Kingdom without such a comprehensive final judgment leads to "mutilating of the Gospel message, and disfiguring Christian morality."[65] He initially suggests this with regard to John's literary technique where he finds neither a chronological scheme of the End nor pure recapitulation, but rather

> John adheres to his purpose and gradually develops his message. An outstanding example is the way he enlarges in his successive visions, with almost wearisome repetition, on the destruction of the world when the End approaches.[66]

Further on he states that these successive prophecies of disaster provide the "essential characteristics of the last days" and are intended to provide "a setting for a more positive story" – as John's way of drawing attention to the ultimate vindication of the people of God in the two positive excursuses in 7.1-17 and 10.1-11.19.[67] The purpose and value of John's focus on this ultimate destruction is to encourage the persecuted Church, provide incentive for its continued faithfulness, and satisfy the "deeper needs" of his hearers (he

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[63] Kiddle, *Revelation*, 119.
[64] Kiddle, *Revelation*, 451-452, "the great mass of pagans whose depravity stifled all hopes of conversion...the grim irony in John's words springs out of a temper and conviction which he shares with other apocalyptists. They possessed no missionary zeal. The trial about to come on the world would result in no conversions..."
[65] Kiddle, *Revelation*, xlix.
[66] Kiddle, *Revelation*, xxx.
[67] Kiddle, *Revelation*, 128-129.

does not say what those might be). If this indeed is the main theme of the Apocalypse, then the issue of the universal visions of salvation must necessarily be dealt with in a manner that goes beyond *what they actually seem to say.*

Kiddle does precisely this by arguing for a hermeneutical grid with which he asserts John interpreted (indeed re-interpreted) the OT. He suggests John understood himself to stand in the place of disclosure – whereby he was able to expound the meaning of the OT prophets in light of the in-breaking End. This self-understanding "gave John the greatest freedom" to re-interpret those things that the OT prophets had either "sealed up" or left in the realm of "mystery."[68] Further, the promises, which God made to Israel through the prophets, were understood by John to apply exclusively to the Church. The result is a 'spiritual hermeneutic' consistently employed by John that directly affects the meaning of the visions of universal salvation. Kiddle's application of this hermeneutic is that, on the one hand, OT texts that carried negative (judgment) overtones in their original contexts *hold* their value. On the other hand, however, those prophetic texts that envisioned more widely positive responses (salvation) are re-interpreted by John to have narrowed application to the people of God. Exactly how those hermeneutical decisions are made is somewhat unclear beyond a stating of the overall interpretive grid.[69]

Based on the foregoing, the interpretive die has been cast so completely that the following sampling of commentary accurately represents Kiddle's view of the eschatological fate of the nations: (1) 9.20-21 "not a ray of hope that they might repent illumines the darkness of an evil world fit only for annihilation...(their) final opportunity spurned;"[70] (2) 10.1-11 "he who made the earth may justly destroy the earth;"[71] (3) 11.3-13 "surely 'conversion' is an inappropriate term for the acknowledgment wrung by sheer terror from the wretched enemies of the two witnesses when it was too late"[72] and further, "John does not share the optimism of Isaiah and the psalmists;"[73] (4) 14.6-20 "the doom

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[68] Kiddle, *Revelation*, 74-78.
[69] Interestingly, this criticism may also be levelled against Bauckham in the opposite direction whereby it is unclear at times how negative OT images have been "subverted" into positive affirmations of salvation for the nations (see below).
[70] Kiddle, *Revelation*, 165.
[71] Kiddle, *Revelation*, 171.
[72] Kiddle, *Revelation*, 174.
[73] Kiddle, *Revelation*, 206.

decreed upon humanity is inescapable...the eternal gospel is not good news;"[74] (5) 15.2-4 where the hymn of praise celebrates God's ability to "wrench homage from the lips of the unregenerate;"[75] and, (6) 21.24,26 "The notion of universal conversion of the heathen...does not agree with John's views of the future. The conversion which he foresees is an exceedingly grim one; he sees mankind quailing at the sight of an angry God." Here again Kiddle employs his 'spiritual' perspective of the redeemed from every nation (5.9; 7.9) to minimize universal language.[76]

2.3.2 Robert Mounce

Robert Mounce's commentary[77] represents the evangelical tradition in NT scholarship, which became more prominent in the second half of the 20th century. The hermeneutical assumptions of his work are not unlike that of Martin Kiddle and George Ladd. It is primarily in light of his interaction with several of the commentators in this review,[78] and a somewhat unique perspective on the prophetic application of Revelation that his commentary deserves a brief overview. While he recognizes the features that Revelation shares with apocalyptic traditions, Mounce concludes that those similarities are mostly formal and stylistic.[79] He cites the major points of departure from apocalyptic tradition in Revelation as being: a more optimistic outlook regarding the present age; a view of history which recognizes God's redemptive activity within history; a tendency to leave the interpretive task to the reader; and, the inclusion of contextually binding pastoral messages. Most significantly for the present study is the feature Mounce terms "moral urgency" in the form of calls to repentance.[80] Based on these characteristics the Apocalypse is best understood within a primarily prophetic framework – a characterization with which Mounce follows the majority of evangelical scholars.[81]

In his treatment of texts with universal language in Revelation, Mounce exhibits three tendencies: first, for the most part he shares the 'spiritualizing re-interpretation'

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[74] Kiddle, *Revelation*, 271, 278.
[75] Kiddle, *Revelation*, 309.
[76] Kiddle, *Revelation*, 438.
[77] Robert Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1977.
[78] Primarily Charles, Kiddle and Caird.
[79] Mounce, *Revelation*, 24.
[80] Mounce, *Revelation*, 24-25.
[81] Mounce, *Revelation*, 25, n.22, cites Minear, Morris and Ladd.

perspective of Kiddle (see above) and speaks of the "universal nature of the Church;" second, he argues against literal interpretation of these texts because of their implications; and finally, Mounce explains any remaining tensions in terms of the historical incongruities necessitated by John's dependence upon OT traditions. This is most evident in his treatment of 21.24,26 with the sudden presence of nations going in and out of the New Jerusalem. He calls this development a "problem" and ultimately sides with Beckwith whose solution was that "John takes over verbally from the prophets who conceive of eschatological future in terms of historical conditions of our present life...and retains words not entirely appropriate to this new setting."[82] Mounce recognizes that Kiddle's equation of these nations with the people of God (5.9; 7.9) misses the point of the metaphor that the redeemed live *within* the city. He also notes that the more marginal 'dispensational' readings of Revelation tend to see here a group of "saved Gentiles" apart from the Church.[83] Finally, in response to the much more positive treatment which Caird gives this particular passage – whereby all those remaining among the nations, now delivered from the deception of "beast worship," are converted – Mounce counters "This interpretation, while possessing a great deal of rhetorical persuasiveness, reads far too much theology into incidental references which are more easily explained in another way."[84]

Following his description of four main interpretive approaches to Revelation, Mounce suggests that each has something to offer and represents an element of what John's eschatological vision must have been.[85] From that standpoint he argues for an approach to interpreting the Apocalypse that embraces "dual prophetic application." Such a view seeks to take the historical circumstances of John's day seriously but at the same

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[82] Mounce, *Revelation*, 385.

[83] Mounce, *Revelation*, 384, n. 49, where he names Walvoord.

[84] Mounce, *Revelation*, 385. He then notes the way in which Rist handled the tension by suggesting that some forms of Jewish messianism and apocalypticism anticipated the eventual conversion of the Gentiles. More characteristic of Jewish thought, however, was the expectation that the wicked would be punished forever. Rist argues that 21.24-26 contains a "glaring inconsistency" because John himself failed to modify the minority tradition to suit his own otherwise "severe and unrelenting" views on the fate of the nations.

[85] Mounce, *Revelation*, 39-45. From an evangelical perspective he summarizes the following interpretive viewpoints: (1) preterist (zeitgeschichtlich), (2) historicist (overview of the course of history), (3) futurist (strictly eschatological), and (4) idealist (timelessly symbolic).

time holds out for a yet future re-application of the prophetic visions.[86] One such example is the identity of the Beast, which Mounce understands to represent the tyrannical Empire that threatened the existence of the Churches in Asia Minor. However, he is also convinced that such an antagonistic "Beast" will yet appear in an ultimately eschatological sense as a precursor to the consummation of the Kingdom of God. What is not clear from Mounce is what the ground rules are for such a reading of the text and how, if at all, that affects the way in which the presence of the nations in the New Jerusalem might be understood.

2.3.3 G. B. Caird

A groundbreaking approach to the question of the conversion of the nations, which supports a positive reading of the text of Revelation, is George Caird's 1966 commentary.[87] It is his conclusions that Bauckham assumes for the most part and seeks to develop with more detailed analysis.[88] Caird includes a final chapter on the theology of Revelation which draws together his consistent reading of John's visions as pictures of God's ultimate success in redeeming back to himself the creation lost in the Garden (Gen 3). These visions are understood to range over the whole course of human history from creation to the New Jerusalem containing in them God's secret plan of redemption.

For Caird, the secret plan of God finds expression in the suffering of Christians (especially the martyrs), and John's purpose is to encourage the persecuted in their hour of trial. The key to this plan is to be found in the paradigmatic function of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus as the faithful witness.[89] Although John understands Jesus to fulfill OT expectation, it is in the "upside-down" form of Divine reversal. The Messiah figure as Lion actually appears as a slaughtered Lamb; the smashing of the nations with an iron scepter actually occurs through the cross; the beastly monster is conquered by letting it burn itself out; and the perfection of the Holy City is accomplished by allowing

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[86] Mounce, *Revelation*, 44-45, "It will be better to hold that the predictions of John, while expressed in terms reflecting his own culture, will find their final and complete fulfilment in the last days of history."
[87] G.B. Caird, *Revelation*.
[88] See Bauckham, *Climax*, 239, where he credits both Caird and Sweet as early proponents of the perspective he develops. It is significant that Caird advances this perspective on the ultimate eschatological conversion of the nations in his other contributions to NT scholarship – this includes a work on Luke-Acts and a "theology of the NT."
[89] Caird, *Revelation*, 290, where he asserts the prominence of the "Jesus of history" for John's theology.

evil to exhaust its strength in unavailing attacks on God's people.[90] Thus Caird concludes, the suffering and martyrdom of the followers of the Lamb leads to the ultimate repentance and conversion of the nations.

With this sketch of the perspective from which Caird reads John's Apocalypse in mind, some observations can be made regarding how the passages with universal language fit into this scheme. He finds in the song of the redeemed (5.13) unbounded expectation for the future,

> The redemption of men from every tribe, tongue, people, and race is far from being the whole story...he hears...the voices of the whole creation in a final outburst of praise...such is his confidence in the universality of Christ's achievement that his vision can not stop short of universal praise.[91]

This necessarily leads him to define the persecutors of God's people (i.e. "the inhabitants of the earth") in the next chapter (6.10-11) in much narrower terms than most commentators: "This is a qualitative, not a quantitative description. It does not imply that the majority of the earth's population are hostile to God and doomed to destruction. On the contrary the martyrs alone, to say nothing of the church, are a vast throng."[92]

As with source critics, albeit for very different reasons, the section 10.1-11.13 represents an important advance in Revelation's theology for Caird. The identity and role of the little scroll introduced in 10.2 holds the key for understanding the rest of the book. It serves the purpose of containing this secret plan of God (the "mystery" in 10.7) for the role of His people as suffering witnesses (in a way that is parallel to the scroll in 5.2 which contained God's purpose achieved by the Lamb).[93] This helps Caird understand the prophetic witness of the Church in the actions of the two witnesses and casts the often-debated response of the citizens of the city (11.13) in the most positive light possible. He states, "In John's vocabulary, 'fear', 'do homage', and 'repent' are almost synonymous terms."[94] As proof Caird points out that rewards are given to those who fear God's name (11.18).[95] He asserts that judgment and destruction are reserved for "the

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[90] Caird, *Revelation*, 292-293.
[91] Caird, *Revelation*, 77.
[92] Caird, *Revelation*, 87.
[93] Bauckham develops this to the point of equating the two scrolls (see below).
[94] Caird, *Revelation*, 140.
[95] Contra Bousset who saw different sources behind 11.13 and 11.18, and therefore, no connection (see above).

destroyers of the earth," a label which refers to demonic principalities aligned against the God of heaven and perhaps those earthly rulers who cooperate with them.[96]

Revelation 14.1-20 provides further evidence that the success of the gospel is ultimately "global." An angelic proclamation of an eternal gospel again uses the language of "fearing God" (14.6-7). Caird reads the subsequent woe against Babylon in light of OT tradition, which anticipated that the Fall of Babylon would bring salvation – not doom (14.8). In the two visions of ingathering that conclude the chapter (14.14-20), he insists that both concepts of "harvest" and "vintage" must refer to the same *kind* of result (ingathering or judgment).[97]

Finally, Caird's reading of 21.3-22.5 is shaped most specially by his determination in 11.18, that the "destroyers of the earth" whom God will destroy are primarily the "principalities and powers" (he borrows the Pauline label) that deceive the inhabitants of the earth. He concludes that the nations largely escape the last battle unscathed, participate in the millennial reign of Christ and the martyrs, and ultimately enjoy the New Jerusalem. The entrance demands to the city (21.7-8) reflect the "fruit" of what a commitment to the anti-God agenda of the Dragon actually looks like. No attempt is made however, to theologically reconcile this strict language with the contrasting universal terminology. On linguistic grounds, Caird observes that the "nations" and "kings of the earth" (21.24, 26) must be heathens who, though formerly aligned with the beast and the whore, are finally subjected to Christ's authority."[98] As the ultimate sign that the curse has been eternally reversed, into the New Jerusalem, "come the nations, still bearing the wounds of those battles by which their hostility to the Lamb has been beaten down, smashed by the iron bar of his inexorable love."[99]

2.3.4 John Sweet

The impact upon the interpretation of Revelation by the questions of occasion and purpose is shown dramatically in the work of John Sweet.[100] He convincingly challenges

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[96] Caird, *Revelation*, 143-144.
[97] Caird, *Revelation*, 189-195.
[98] Caird, *Revelation*, 279. He suggests that "to suppose that by these phrases he means only the elect would be to run counter to his usage throughout the whole of his book."
[99] Caird, *Revelation*, 280.
[100] John M. Sweet, *Revelation*, London: SCM Press, 1979.

the traditional persecution view; namely, that John wrote his apocalypse primarily for reasons of encouragement and exhortation to faithfulness in the face of suffering (even martyrdom). Sweet suggests that a fair reading of the historical data does not show Domitian to be an Emperor bent on persecuting Christians (any more or less than most other emperors) or forcing participation in the emperor cult.[101] Rather, with the memories of Neronic persecution fading, John is faced with a much more subtle and insidious threat to the Churches in Asia Minor: the imminent danger of "slipping into conformity with their world at the expense of their witness to it."[102] This perspective leads Sweet to read the visions of Revelation in a way which is not only significant to the passages on the conversion of the nations, but more importantly, the issue of how one might reconcile the stricter language of discipleship with the "universal" themes.

It is likely in light of his reading of Revelation as a serious "internal memo," that Sweet, while certainly attracted by the prospect of the kings of the earth and the nations being included in the New Jerusalem, can finally not resolve the tension with the ever-present motif of discipleship boundaries. He agrees with Caird that the language of 21.3-22.5 must refer to the same kings and nations, which earlier cowered at the wrath of the Lamb (6.15-17) and aligned themselves with the Dragon and his accomplices (13.7,8,12,14). But the issue of how John actually arrives at this surprising conclusion remains a mystery, "Is *wrath* the last word for these deluded earth-dwellers? John has no doubt of their culpability and its terrible consequences. But in the final vision *the kings of the earth*...bring their glory into the new Jerusalem...There is no formal resolution of the paradox."[103]

A second way in which Sweet's method resembles that of Caird, is his understanding of the "divine reversal" not only as characteristic of the Gospel, but more specifically as a recurring theme for John's Apocalypse. Once again, however, their conclusions differ due to their differences regarding occasion (spiritual climate of the churches) and situation (historical context). For Caird the vindication of the saints' suffering in the final conversion of the nations represented this reversal; Sweet, however, understands John to be challenging those *inside* the Church to see through the temporal

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[101] Sweet, *Revelation*, 21-35, where he addresses the issues of date and situation.
[102] Sweet, *Revelation*, 11.
[103] Sweet, *Revelation*, 145 (italics his).

deceptions of complicity with Rome. Sweet not so much disagrees with Caird's conclusion, as that he argues the focus of these texts is not the nations but the Church. Christians must be shown, "the deadliness of compromise in spite of its apparent rewards, and the real rewards of witness to the truth in spite of its apparently suicidal folly." [104]

If Sweet is hesitant at first to attempt a resolution between the wrath of the Lamb (6.17) and the presence of the nations in the New Jerusalem (21.24,26), he becomes much more convinced of Caird's position based on the two witnesses (11.3-13) and the visions of reaping (14.14-20). He asserts that the language of "giving glory to God" (11.13) regularly expresses repentance in the OT.[105] He is then able to understand the harvest and vintage scenes not primarily as judgment (*contra* most commentators), but rather as a gathering up of the successes of the two witnesses.[106] The conflicting universal images allow for the deceived earth-dwellers to repent, and those who refuse to share the same fate as the Dragon and beasts. Sweet's perspective on the conversion of the nations is ultimately that while it may be the *telos* of human history, it is not the primary point of the Apocalypse. He explains that "his (John's) book is addressed not to the nations but to Christians who are in danger of identifying themselves with the beast, in order that they may maintain Christ's witness to the nations, for their salvation."[107]

2.3.5 David Aune

The recent, major commentary by David Aune seeks to synthesize a wide range of primary sources and incorporate the strengths of earlier critical methodologies.[108] Most notable among these is his reclamation of certain features of the source-critical method that have largely been abandoned in recent decades. His review of the more recent literary-narrative approaches (see 2.4 below) is cautious at best and critical at points. He observes that the recent application of "nonbiblical literary criticism" is a reaction against historical criticism with its tendency to atomise and fragment documents.[109] While Aune is quite prepared to recognize a wide range of "literary links" within the Apocalypse, he

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[104] Sweet, *Revelation*, 11.
[105] Sweet, *Revelation*, 189.
[106] Sweet, *Revelation*, 229-230.
[107] Sweet, *Revelation*, 189.
[108] David Aune, *Revelation* (WBC 52a,b,c; Waco: Word, 1997-1998).
[109] Aune, *Revelation*, cviii-cix.

suggests that their presence actually underscores the absence of true narrative unity. He points out the lack of common *dramatis personae* to create continuity of plot among the various episodes.[110] In particular he takes issue with Bauckham's claim that Revelation holds pride of place among NT documents vis-à-vis internal unity.[111] Aune also claims that L.L. Thompson's characterization of "linguistic unity"[112] does not address the issues of language and style in Revelation. Several features of Aune's work are pertinent here: his evaluation of the sociological features characteristic of both prophetic and apocalyptic genres; his proposal of a compositional theory of Revelation based on specific reconstructions of authorship, genre, and date; and, the impact of source-critical analysis on his reading of passages with universal terminology, as well as corresponding characterizations of Jewish apocalyptic traditions.

Aune's proposal regarding genre is that Revelation is a "prophetic apocalypse" which combines apocalyptic traditions within a prophetic framework.[113] Such a merging of forms was "an attempt to give a new lease on life to apocalyptic traditions that could not and did not retain their vitality in early Christianity because of their indissoluble association with nationalistic myths connected with the royal ideology of ancient Israel."[114] Aune summarizes their differing sociological function and perspective as follows: apocalyptic thought was the product of an oppressed minority that clearly distinguished between the righteous and the wicked in terms of eschatological reward and punishment; prophetic traditions, however, operated under two related assumptions – first, the wicked could repent and change their ways; and secondly, the righteous (faithful) required admonition, censure and exhortation to remain faithful or to repent. He concludes that Revelation exhibits the formal features of apocalyptic tradition without sharing its nationalistic worldview or theological boundaries.

Aune proposes a compositional theory (what he terms "diachronic composition criticism") that assumes John was a Jewish apocalyptist whose "lengthy career" began in

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[110] Aune, *Revelation*, cviii.
[111] See the review of Bauckham's analysis below (section 2.5).
[112] Thompson's proposal for narrative unity, metaphorical unity, unity of OT images, and unity exhibited by the language of worship in Revelation is reviewed in more detail below (see section 2.4.3).
[113] Aune, *Revelation*, lxxiii. He describes Karrer's attempts to demonstrate the thoroughgoing epistolary character of Revelation as unconvincing and relegates the obvious letter features to an artificial framework of a late revision.
[114] Aune, *Revelation*, xc.

Palestine – most likely in the early 60s C.E. John may have been among those who fled Palestine in the wake of the second revolt (66-73 C.E.) and then settled in Roman Asia Minor with the identity of Christian prophet. Aune departs from most source critics by suggesting that while the material of the Apocalpyse was originally a number of relatively independent documents, John himself is author and editor – he is responsible for both the original visionary content and the subsequent reworking and editing.[115] The present literary form is the result of two major editions of "prophetic apocalyptic" material – each of which underwent several stages of editing.[116] For Aune the fact that arguments can be made for dating Revelation in both the 60s and 90s C.E. lends credibility to his reconstruction of "layered composition." More importantly, he suggests that this hypothesis allows for a range of movement from Jewish to Christian features within the material that may reveal theological development and adjustment during John's career. How this might be applied to the tension of the images of universal salvation and judgment becomes apparent in Aune's classification of that material.

Generally speaking, Aune's reading emphasizes the language of judgment against the nations in the author's communicative strategy. Regarding 1.7 he observes that "The first oracle...predict(s) the Parousia ("coming") as a cosmic event that will be witnessed by all and anticipates the distress and fear of unbelievers about to experience judgment (and so anticipates 19.11-16)."[117] Similarly, in 9.20-21 where the response of earth's inhabitants to the plagues is not repentance, Aune suggests that the motif itself is less real than apparent.[118] John's prophetic re-commissioning (10.11) is also understood in terms

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[115] Aune, *Revelation*, cxxi.

[116] The two major editions proposed by Aune, which also underwent several stages of revision, are: (1) 1.7a-12; 4.1-22.5 dated in the mid 60s C.E.; and (2) 1.1-6,12b-3.22; 22.6-21 in addition to several expansions / interpolations in the first edition dated to the mid 90s C.E. In this proposal texts that contain the language of universal salvation are understood to be part of the older, Jewish apocalyptic "first edition." This view counters the opinion of Bousset and other earlier source-critics who understood such expectations to be a feature of later "Christian" theology. Further, Aune's structural observation of seven "heavenly scenes" dispersed throughout the composition is noteworthy in that five of the seven passages contain universal language. The calls to faithfulness and perseverance on the part of the Churches, as well as the μετανοέω theme, however, appear almost entirely in the "second edition" of later material. They reflect the more immediate pastoral concerns of the Christian prophet late in his career.

[117] Aune, *Revelation*, 59.

[118] Aune, *Revelation*, 541, "The motif of repentance occurs here quite unexpectedly...In fact, the motif of repentance occurs only rarely in Rev 4.1-22.5, and only in the context of a negative reaction to the eschatological punishments sent by God (9.20,21; 16.9,11). This repentance motif is a formal motif that has been derived by the author from the plague story in Exodus...where it is couched in such a way that there is no doubt that a change of mind on the part of the pharaoh of Egypt was never considered a real possibility."

of negative judgment.[119] Both the scene of angelic proclamation (14.6-13) and the dual harvest/vintage visions (14.14-20) are understood by Aune to be negative in character. He recognizes the global reach of the angelic proclamation (14.6-7) but interprets its "universality" in terms of *opportunity* and not necessarily *positive response*. This, he maintains, runs against the character of Jewish apocalyptic literature:

> The uncompromising universality of the proclamation of the message appealing to people to repent in view of the impending eschatological judgment of God is contrary to the normal parochialism inherent in Jewish apocalyptic literature, in which only a specific ethnic group, usually a Jewish remnant, is the object of God's saving activity in the world...The author refuses to espouse religious nationalism, whether Jewish or pagan, and instead categorizes people only in terms of their faithfulness to the Lamb...or their failure to repent.[120]

While acknowledging Bauckham's position (that both harvest and vintage visions are positive) and mentioning some arguments in its favour, he offers two reasons for seeing a double judgment vision here: the commonly negative metaphoric use of δρέπανον (sharp sickle) elsewhere; and, the literary dependence of the first vision upon the second.[121] Thus he recognizes in 14.6-20 the "universal invitation" in the proclamation of good news, but also an ultimately dominant theme of judgment. Further, Aune attributes the dramatic and violent expression of the judgment of the kings and nations of the earth in 19.11-21 to Jewish traditions regarding Jerusalem's ultimate vindication.[122] Having earlier suggested that the militant imagery (19.11-16) is symbolic in nature and judicial in function, he appears to view these apocalyptic traditions as primarily illustrating the comprehensive victory of the Lamb.[123]

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[119] Aune, *Revelation*, 573-575, bases this on (1) John's predominantly judgment-oriented message to the nations; (2) the negative tone of Ezek 2.9-10 on which this re-commissioning is modelled; and (3) the overall negative character of Christian witness is attested elsewhere in the NT (Matt 10.18; Lk 12.11). He concludes, "...(John) is commanded to denounce the wickedness of those who have not responded to the Christian gospel."

[120] Aune, *Revelation*, 827.

[121] Aune, *Revelation*, 843, 845.

[122] Aune, *Revelation*, 1047-48, "This narrative unit consists of an apocalyptic scenario, based on the tradition of the inviolability of Zion, in which the kings of earth gather in an unsuccessful attempt to conquer Jerusalem." He observes two major variants of this apocalyptic scenario: (1) the hostile nations are destroyed by divine intervention before they actually conquer Jerusalem (Rev 19.17-21; 20.7-10; cf. Ps 46; 48.1-8; 76.1-9; Isa 17.12-14; 29.1-8; Ezek 38.1-23; 39.1-6; Joel 3.1-17; Zech 12.1-9; *Sib. Or.*3.657-701; *1Enoch* 56.5-8; 100.1-6; 4 Ezra 13.5-11,29-38); and, (2) the hostile nations temporarily conquer Jerusalem but are eventually repulsed by divine intervention" (Rev 11.2; Zech 14.1-11; *Pss. Sol.* 17.11-25; Lk. 19.41-44; 21.20-24).

[123] Aune, *Revelation*, 1064, 1067.

Finally, in his evaluation of the climactic New Jerusalem vision (21.1-22.5) Aune makes none of the sweeping textual rearrangements, which typified earlier source-critics.[124] He sees no inherent tension and suggests that the final expression of God's righteous action will be to dispense justice by punishing the disobedient and rewarding the obedient.[125] So far, while identifying isolated instances of universal language, Aune's straightforward understanding of eschatological judgment and reward remains intact. However, with John's depiction of the kings and nations of the earth participating in the New Jerusalem (21.24,26), Aune acknowledges narrative tension:

> There is, then, *an apparently striking inconsistency* in the eschatological scenario of Revelation introduced by this verse (and v 26) since 19.17-21 and 20.7-9 narrate the destruction of the kings of the earth and their armies and 21.1 records the destruction of the first heaven and the first earth, and yet here in vv 24-27, nations and kings of the earth still exist.[126]

He detects the simultaneous influence of distinct apocalyptic traditions regarding the role and fate of the nations from which the author simply could not extract himself.[127] First, he compares 19.11-21.27 with *Sib. Or.*3.657-731 to illustrate that such narrative tension had traditional roots.[128] Second, he cites four expressions of Jewish eschatological expectation regarding the destiny of the Gentiles: (1) all Gentiles would be annihilated; (2) the Gentiles would be excluded at Israel's restoration; (3) the Gentiles would play a subservient role, i.e. pilgrimage to Jerusalem to pay tribute; and, (4) the Gentiles would participate fully in eschatological salvation and worship of Yahweh. Aune then suggests that 19.17-21 reflects the first strand of tradition while "In Rev 21.24-26, full

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[124] He argues for one disruption (21.3-4 should have been directly followed by 22.3-5) and one interpolation (21.15-17). Neither issue directly affects the tension between universal salvation language and strict moral requirements upon the faithful – which lies at the heart of earlier source-critical approaches (see above, section 2.2).

[125] Aune, *Revelation*, 1133, "The climactic statement by God in vv 5-8 succinctly summarizes the central message of Revelation...those who conquer, i.e., hold fast to the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, will be children of God and enjoy eternal blessedness; those who do not turn from their sinful ways will be punished with eternal torment."

[126] Aune, *Revelation*, 1171 (italics mine).

[127] Aune, *Revelation*, 1172, "Nevertheless, the ancient Jewish eschatological motif of nations coming to Jerusalem in the eschaton, i.e. "Zion eschatology," was so firmly fixed in apocalyptic tradition that it is necessarily included here."

[128] Aune, *Revelation*, 1171-1172, where he outlines: (1) an attack on the temple in Jerusalem by the kings of the peoples; (2) God's defense annihilating the attackers; (3) the restoration of Zion; and, (4) the true recognition of God as sovereign by the inhabitants of the islands and cities.

participation in eschatological salvation is presupposed" (fourth strand).[129] Coupled with his recognition of John's willingness to leave traditional universal language intact, however, is Aune's belief that such motifs do not actually reflect the author's perspective. Regarding the allusion in 22.2 to Ezekiel 47.12 he maintains "The allusion is simply mechanical, however, since there is no real place in the eschatological scheme of Revelation for 'the healing of the nations' construed as their conversion."[130]

One senses a possible inconsistency in that Aune maintained earlier that John's theology had broken free of all nationalistic elements within Jewish apocalyptic tradition. What Aune's awareness of Jewish traditions does illustrate, however, is the depth and complexity of Revelation's relationship with early Jewish apocalyptic thought.

2.4 Literary / Narrative Approaches to Revelation

If the older source-critical method tended to dissect a document in an attempt to identify traditions behind the final form, the literary-narrative approach has sought to restore the balance by encouraging a more impressionistic, holistic understanding of individual documents. Within this method, interpretation of a document as a whole is best achieved through analysis of its literary characteristics as they contribute to the larger narrative as a unified story. While extensively applied throughout the range of biblical literature, literary-narrative readings of John's Apocalypse have produced unique and noteworthy results. This is due in no small part to the fact that apocalyptic literature richly employs symbols and images, which can present difficulties for 'propositional' or linear thought.

Most commentators who apply this method share the common goal of making Revelation accessible to all readers and allowing the 'story' to take new shape and meaning for every new audience. There is, however, a wide range of opinion within this particular framework on the following issues: (1) definition and use of literary terminology; (2) the debated validity of historical inquiry and temporal character of narrative generally; and, (3) the communicative function of images and symbols in an apocalyptic literary setting (i.e. Do they provide information or evoke impressions and

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[129] Aune, *Revelation*, 1172.
[130] Aune, *Revelation*, 1178.

response? Or both?). The work of the following commentators represents this diversity among recent readings of Revelation from a literary-narrative standpoint.

2.4.1 David L. Barr

The particular brand of literary-narrative criticism, which David Barr applies to Revelation, is what he terms 'narratology' – the investigation into how the Apocalypse functions as a story. In a series of articles that demonstrate his development of this theory,[131] Barr suggests that the concern of 'narratology' is with an evaluation of the impression or impact a given story is intended to evoke in its hearers / readers. His contributions to the concerns of the present study can be summarized with the following categories: assumptions regarding the aims of narratological criticism; analysis of the structure and plot of Revelation; an evaluation of the purpose of imagery and symbols from a narratological perspective; and, relevant conclusions regarding the discussion of the fate of the nations.

The basic assumption of a narratological reading of Revelation insists that how it functions as a story must be answered before a reconstruction of its role in the lives of the original hearer / readers is possible. According to Barr this approach fundamentally differs from more traditional methods of criticism, which have assumed that Revelation was written in the first place to *provide information.* Conversely, 'narratology' assumes that narratives were written primarily "...to express the feelings and convictions of the author and to instil feelings and convictions in an audience. That is, the function of narrative language is more expressive and performative than informative."[132] Developing

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[131] David Barr, "The Apocalypse as a Symbolic Transformation of the World: A Literary Analysis," *Int* 38 (1984): 39-50; ____, "The Apocalypse of John as Oral Enactment," *Interpretation* 40 (1986): 243-256; ___, "Transforming the Imagination: John's Apocalypse as Story," (unpublished paper; [cited February 23, 2002], posted online: www.wright.edu/~dbarr/Imagination.htm). While his narrative approach and conclusions regarding structure and plot have remained consistent over the time of these publications, some points of evolution might be noted: (1) his earlier work accepts the theory of widespread persecution as the motivating factor for John's writing – a view he has since completely rejected (see below); (2) the observations regarding symbolic transformation are qualified by a more 'synthetic' understanding of symbols in recent articles; (3) his work has demonstrated increasingly less interest in the historical circumstances of John and his audience in Roman Asia Minor; and, (4) his later work betrays a greater hesitancy to claim interpretations of symbols as objective realities beyond the experience of any given audience (original or subsequent) of Revelation. Barr recently released a full commentary (*Tales of the End: A Narrative Commentary on the Book of Revelation* [Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 1998]).

[132] Barr, "Imagination," 7.

this understanding of function, Barr suggests that the result is to release imagination and create community – to inspire a vision of resistance against the values of the Empire.[133]

In his application of narrative theory, Barr suggests the following insights in terms of structure and internal coherence. Within the macro-structure three distinct yet related stories emerge: (1) the Letter Scroll as a theophany (1.1-3.21); (2) the Worship Scroll as a throne vision (4.1-11.19); and, (3) the War Scroll as a cosmic war story (12.1-22.16). These stories unveil a succession of increasingly fantastic images and actions and share few connections between their respective incidents. Barr then describes the narrative shape of Revelation in two interconnected ways: first, he imagines the story to be "omega-shaped" whereby it returns to its point of origin, and in which a story, that seems to be about the End, returns repeatedly to the urgencies of the present; second, he can also speak of the plot line as a circular upward spiral – where progression is evident but neither recapitulation nor linear chronology are satisfactory explanations of structure or plot.

Since imagery is employed strictly for effect by the author, the way in which seemingly conflicting concepts are interpreted in a narratological reading is in how they represent and shape ideology. The example to which Barr refers in most detail is the dual depiction of Jesus in the Apocalypse as both "slaughtered-standing Lamb" (second story) and "Divine Warrior" (first and third stories). The former represents the ideology of "sacred suffering" while the latter pictures the ideology of "sacred violence and holy war." The effect of subverting one image with the other creates a kind of theological balance. Barr concludes,

> Either story, taken by itself is disastrous. Were we to have only the Lamb story we might be tempted to accept suffering and oppression and leave all injustice in the hands of God. Were we to have only the warrior story, we might be tempted to the exercise of violence. John's portrayal of Jesus-as-victim and Jesus-as-victor are both inadequate until the two images permeate each other.[134]

This summary of Barr's narratological analysis leads to several important points regarding interpretation and application of the tension between visions of universal

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[133] Barr, "Imagination," 8, "...the complex psychological effect of this story is to distance the hearer from Rome and from Roman culture. To disillusion the hearer – to destroy their illusion – that they can be at home in the Roman world is the primary effect of this story."
[134] Barr, "Imagination," 6.

salvation and judgment. First, the question of what information John might have intended to provide his audience regarding the future is completely irrelevant. Since the book is intended to 'perform' more than 'inform', it ends where it begins – in the present. Thus the Apocalypse narratively redefines what 'the end of the world' means, and simply does not address the 'actual' future. Second, Barr acknowledges both salvation and judgment as elements of John's overall motivational technique and present in all three stories within the macro-framework;[135] however, no attempt is made to reconcile their respective value in the overall narrative. In the absence of his own statement on this issue one might speculate as to whether he would advocate a similar balance between the images of universal salvation and judgment as his treatment of Jesus as "victim" and "victor" whereby one is incomprehensible without the other. This type of "permeating of the images" is explicitly argued for in at least one other literary-narrative analysis (see below).

2.4.2 Eugene Boring

The work of Eugene Boring represents an important contribution not only to the study of Revelation from a literary-narrative perspective, but specifically to defining the difficulties inherent in the text with regard to universal language. As a serious attempt to wrestle with this issue at both the theological and practical levels, Boring's work offers at least four noteworthy elements: structural observations and outline of Revelation based on a literary-narrative reading; a discussion of 'pictorial' and 'propositional' uses of language; a thoughtful excursus regarding "Universal Salvation and Paradoxical Language" which sets him apart from other commentators on this theme; as well as observations on relevant passages.

In establishing the interpretive ground-rules for his commentary,[136] Boring suggests that this approach to reading the text "speaks of it as a literary achievement which can be appreciated as a 'whole'."[137] By understanding Revelation as a literary-narrative composition from an apocalyptic perspective, he maintains that the use of sources and older traditions need not be incompatible with visionary experience. This

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[135] Barr, "Literary Analysis," 45.
[136] Eugene Boring, *Revelation* (IBC; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989).
[137] Boring, *Revelation*, 28-29.

material, however it may have been arrived at, represents a coherent unity structured around the central motif of "city": (1) messages concerning the present situation to the "mundane cities" (1-3); (2) eschatological distress of the "great city" – Babylon (4-18); (3) final victory of God in the "holy city" – New Jerusalem (19-22). Each of these divisions contains the narrative categories: actor, action, location, and time. These divisions, however, do not represent linear (chronological) thought or simple recapitulation, but rather a spiralling literary composition, which renews and intensifies to bring out John's theological concerns.[138]

One further structural comment is of special significance to the present study. Boring suggests that Revelation, as a coherent literary composition, is interspersed with "anticipatory announcements of the coming salvation."[139] He suggests that these announcements reflect John's certain conviction that the future salvation of God's people shapes their present existence and places their current struggles in an ultimate (or cosmic) perspective. Moreover, these passages reflect material that was identified by earlier source-critics as older Jewish traditions (7.9-17; 11.1-13; 14.1-20; 15.2-4).[140] Boring understands the intent of their universal symbols and terminology to function theologically as 'hope' rather than communicating future events or details.

How one reads the tension of universal salvation alongside judgment images and strict guidelines for followers of the Lamb is, for Boring, primarily a matter of appreciating John's use of language. He maintains that much of the misunderstanding and misapplication of Revelation stems from a failure to recognize John's language as 'pictorial' rather than 'propositional'. John used pictorial language precisely because he dealt with concepts and ideas that fall into the category of 'ultimates'. By necessity then these "pictures communicate *meaning* without claiming to give scientific descriptions."[141] Boring characterises pictorial language in five distinct ways: pictorial language is non-objectifying (not full description but rather points *to* a reality); pictorial language is open-

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[138] Boring, *Revelation*, 32-33.

[139] Boring, *Revelation*, 33, states, "This is not only good psychology, it is also good theology." This identification of 'proleptic visions' echoes the views of Caird and Sweet (see above).

[140] See the examples with which Boring seeks to demonstrate the connecting relationships between this series of "anticipatory" texts and the final vision of the New Jerusalem in 21.1-22.6 (*Revelation*, 168). These links occur both thematically and in terms of how they function for John in the overall literary-narrative scheme.

[141] Boring, *Revelation*, 52, (italics his).

ended, tensive, polyvalent (symbols in tension evoke meaning while intentionally not being informational); pictorial language is non-logical and non-inferential (no attempt to maintain logical consistency with the use of symbols);[142] pictorial language is not diachronic but rather synchronic (instead of a linear, chronological line of logic, the language and symbols of Revelation contribute to a "construction of simultaneous images");[143] and finally, pictorial language uses myth as the vehicle for truth ("this-worldly imagery" used in metaphorical-narrative ways to express those realities).[144]

Pictorial language facilitates an understanding not only of the tensive images of universal salvation and judgment but also, and perhaps especially for Boring, the simultaneously strict expectations upon disciples. In an excursus on precisely the tension at hand, he sets the conflicting terminology in the categories "universal salvation" and "limited salvation."[145] This excursus serves as the final statement of the commentary – evidence of how central Boring believes this issue to be to understanding Revelation. His point of departure is recognition that both concepts are incorporated in John's visions.[146] He describes John as a "dialectical theologian" who intentionally refuses to lend one view more weight at the expense of the other. While insisting that these pictorial images each carry serious, universal implications, he is also aware of the dangers of consigning this issue to the ambivalent ground of "theological paradox."

Boring's treatment of relevant texts reveals that while he affirms equally paradoxical language concerning universal salvation and judgment from a literary-narrative perspective, his final theological stance rests with a positive interpretation. In his comments on the parousia scene (1.7) he understands "mourning" as repentance on the grounds of "John's general theology of universal reconciliation"[147] and then suggests that this functions as a prophetic declaration, which foreshadows the overriding theme of

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[142] Boring, *Revelation*, 57, "Pictorial language can communicate the message expressed by a certain picture, vision, or symbol without affirming all the implications of the message if it were reduced to propositional language."
[143] Boring, *Revelation*, 58.
[144] Boring, *Revelation*, 62. By way of logical extension, Boring's commitment to the language of Revelation as pictorial leads him to encourage the same kind of reading of his own commentary by the reader.
[145] Boring, *Revelation*, 226-231.
[146] Boring, *Revelation*, 228, "John has no *one* consistent view...Neither group of texts can be subordinated to the other..."
[147] Boring, *Revelation*, 80.

the book.[148] However, in an interesting application of his commitment to the nature of pictorial language, Boring then immediately suggests that John may indeed have intended to leave the issue "dialectically ambiguous." The problem of how the firm calls to obedience might be reconciled with an ultimately universal salvation, comes to the fore in the messages to the churches where Boring admits to much more "straightforward language." The emphasis on "conquering" and the polemic against accommodation to the social, religious and political realities of the Roman Empire reflect both internal and external threats to the Christian community. For Boring, John's urgency is to encourage "responsible Christian conduct" – to be understood as the kind of action (works) appropriate to maintaining faithfulness.[149] The concluding scenes of both chapters 4 and 5 "end on an absolute universal note": God as Creator of *all* (4.11); the choir that sings the final chorus of praise to the Lamb is comprised of the *whole* creation (5.13).[150] Boring insists that the early placement of these affirmations in the overall scheme of Revelation is intentional and crucial to understanding John's view of ultimate universal salvation. It serves to help the hearers/readers not to misunderstand the "violent" message of judgment that follows (beginning with 6.1) as God's last word.[151]

Boring does not avoid discussion of the judgment language present in Revelation. He makes a case for understanding it as non-literal on the one hand, but vital to John's pastoral purpose on the other hand. John uses "insider language" that needs such violent referential symbols in order to adequately express the community's common experience of salvation. The violent imagery reaffirms the conviction that humanity suffers from universal sinfulness and further articulates the confession that "insiders" too, are sinners. John's theology and use of language here are indebted to both the present reality of suffering and crisis, and features inherent to the apocalyptic tradition.[152] Nowhere is this

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[148] This "general theology of universal reconciliation," which Boring applies to John's use of Zechariah, is further evidenced by John's transformation of Ezekiel's "healing" into "healing of the nations" (22.2).
[149] Boring, *Revelation*, 111, where he concludes that the terms "works" and "faithfulness" must not be misunderstood in the Pauline frame of reference – namely, what one does to "get saved" or "stay saved". Works and / or faithfulness are in fact the marks of loyalty and integrity that mirror the character and mission of the Lamb. The term "conquering" is also used of the Lamb and "...in both cases, that of Christ and that of Christians, means no more or less than dying...For Christians, what it means to 'win' has been redefined by the cross of Jesus."
[150] Boring, *Revelation*, 111 (italics his).
[151] Boring, *Revelation*, 112.
[152] Boring, *Revelation*, 112-118.

perspective on the violent language of judgment more evident than in Boring's observation regarding the images of eternal punishment in 14.14-20:

> To even ask whether Revelation teaches eternal torment for the damned is to misconstrue the book as a source of doctrines, to mistake its pictures for propositions. John's language does not deliver a doctrine about the fate of outsiders; it functions to warn insiders who ponder the question: 'Is it such a terrible thing to participate in the Roman worship?'[153]

By dealing with the related concepts of violent language and duration of judgment in this manner it is then possible for Boring to make two divergent claims: on the one hand he insists that judgment was a "serious" concern of John's; and, on the other hand, he rejects any "dualistic" notions of God's justice (punishment) existing co-eternally with his mercy (salvation).[154] By what criteria John's pictorial language can finally be evaluated this way is not disclosed by Boring, however. If the most that can be said about divine judgment is that it is "serious," then its secondary place to ultimate redemption is already assured. This reading of the text is evident in 7.1-17 where with the two visions of the church – 7.1-8 (militant) and 7.9-17 (triumphant) – Boring suggests, "Christology and discipleship fade into one." Both Christ and his Church are active in bringing about the eschaton and final victory of God.[155] In 19.11-21, the militaristic imagery of the Divine Warrior's final victory is understood by Boring as redefined by the vision of the "slaughtered Lamb" in 5.1-14. As such, the sword with which he fights is in his mouth (his word, 19.13,15) and the blood, which stains his robe, is his own (19.13). Thus John "uses the ancient *form* of portraying the ultimate victory of God as winning a great battle in which those who have resisted God are slaughtered. But he fills this with new *content*."[156]

The climactic vision of the New Jerusalem (21.1-22.5) is, for Boring, proof of universal salvation in Revelation. In light of the earlier discussion regarding the language of Revelation as pictorial, the differing descriptions of the New Jerusalem – which caused source critics great difficulty – present no dissonance. They simply illustrate more than one reality present in this Holy City. Similarly, the strict language with respect to admission to the City (21.6-8) presents no difficulty in spite of the simultaneous vision of

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[153] Boring, *Revelation*, 170.
[154] Boring, *Revelation*, 149.
[155] Boring, *Revelation*, 127-131.
[156] Boring, *Revelation*, 196 (italics his).

the participation of the nations and kings of the earth (21.24,26). John specifically aims the 'vice-catalogue' at

> the failures of Christians under the pressure of persecution and the threat of it: lack of courage before the Roman courts, lack of truthfulness in making the declaration of their Christian faith regardless of the consequences...His declaration that those people will not be in the city of eschatological salvation functions as an exhortation to faithful witness in the present. John does not say, however, that anyone who has ever been guilty of these failings is prohibited from participation in the Holy City, only that no one will bring these sinful practices with him or her into the Holy City. The list serves to characterize life in the city of God, not a limitation on who will finally be there.[157]

The lasting impression with which John leaves the reader is that this New Jerusalem is a "big, inclusive city". On this point Boring suggests "Against everything we might have expected, he has modified his tradition in order to portray a radically inclusive city."[158]

One final note must be made regarding Boring's perspective on this issue. He has contributed not only to the discussion of 'universal salvation' in Revelation, but also in Pauline theology.[159] Interestingly, in spite of the fact that Boring recognizes very different literary genres to represent the letters of Paul over against Revelation, his characterization of the use of language is strikingly similar.[160] One can observe here that there seems to be a commitment to a larger theological perspective at work in Boring's thinking than simply coming to terms with the data of Revelation.[161]

2.4.3 Leonard Thompson

How John may have intended Revelation to function sociologically, and the accompanying communicative strategy employed to bring about those ends, is the primary concern of Leonard Thompson's work.[162] Writing from this 'socio-rhetorical' perspective, he takes seriously Revelation's historical setting (more so than most literary-narrative critics) and proposes a "linguistic unity" which functions as the vehicle for

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[157] Boring, *Revelation*, 217-218.
[158] Boring, *Revelation*, 221.
[159] Eugene Boring, "The Language of Universal Salvation in Paul," *JBL* 105/2 (1986): 269-292.
[160] Boring, "Language," 275, comments on Paul's use of soteriological language by suggesting that its often exclusive tone is "not determined by propositional systematic consistency, nor by his developments in his theology...but by the demands of the central encompassing images within which his language functions, images that necessarily involve him in conflicting language games."
[161] Similarly, the same can be said of Caird whose work at other points in NT writings and theology reflect a consistent "universal salvation" approach (see above).
[162] Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

John's message – what Thompson terms "the seer's vision of an unbroken world." Reconstruction of the dynamics of discourse both internally between John and his churches and externally between them and their civic communities is what allows one to appreciate the complex, literary achievement of John. This process also enables the reader to appreciate the unified thought and theology of John the seer (i.e. to enter into the unbroken vision of the seer for oneself).

Thompson begins by stating "The language of Revelation transmits a tremendous amount of information."[163] What he refers to is the actual message from John, the world-view of John, the situation of Church and Empire, and the network of relationships inside and outside of the Christian communities in Asia Minor. How John communicates this information is in itself revealing. According to Thompson, the very presence of linguistic unity – the way in which John communicates his message – in fact represents that message. His rationale for why this information is important is that "the seer is constructing an encompassing vision that includes the everyday social realities in Asia Minor."[164] Thompson thus defines this "encompassing vision" in these terms:

> ultimately everything and every power derives from and depends upon God. He is the process that binds past, present, and future; heaven, earth, and subterranean demonic forces; faithful followers, apostates, and infidels. For that reason, this monistic flow of divinely ordered being can never quite be compartmentalized into creature and creator, God and Satan, this age and the age to come, or heaven and earth. That is the unbroken world disclosed through the language of the Apocalypse.[165]

The relevance which this perspective has to the present study is: in the description of the nature of boundaries as being "soft, blurry and relative;" in the discussion on how the language of worship interacts with the dramatic narratives to balance the issues of cosmology (space) and eschatology (time); and, the implications for the presence of narrative/theological conflict or tension in Revelation in light of Thompson's view of the seer's unbroken vision of the world (see above).

Thompson raises the issue of John's use of boundaries by posing the question "Does the seer envision a world in which certain elements are in essential conflict with

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[163] Thompson, *Revelation*, 37. This in itself is close to the antithesis of Barr's contention and, to some degree, Boring's as well (see above).
[164] Thompson, *Revelation*, 74.
[165] Thompson, *Revelation*, 91.

other elements?"[166] He maintains that unlike the common usage of 'boundary' – a limit or perimeter marker imposed on space/property – the Apocalypse uses boundaries as marks of distinction or difference, not limitation. As a result, these boundaries are not "hard absolutes" but rather "soft, blurred divisions," which may flow into one another and are open to transformation.[167] The application of this description of boundaries to the language of Revelation leads Thompson to observe that "soft, blurry" distinctions exist among descriptions of the forces of good and the forces of evil, as well as *between* good and evil. He illustrates this by pointing out several "homologies" in: (1) the descriptions of human groups and demonic forces; (2) the features with which Lamb and Beast mirror each other; and, (3) the common characterization of both the opponents of the faithful in the messages to the Churches and demonic figures elsewhere. This description of boundaries in Revelation necessarily influences how the visions of universal salvation and global judgment are harmonized and interpreted.

Thompson's view of the interplay between the language of worship (hymns and doxologies) and the dramatic narratives is that they in fact not only provide unity and coherence on a literary level but make the message of Revelation relevant and accessible to the hearer/reader. He suggests that worship is the expression of "spatial transcendence" (cosmology), while dramatic narratives provide the expression of "temporal transcendence" (eschatology). Worship connects earth to heaven and narrative connects present to future.[168] The result of John's attention to these two realms of transcendence is that the hymns and liturgy make present the Kingdom of God and his just judgment prior to the dramatic narration of those eschatological events – they are experienced in worship. Both kingship and judgment have their place in a vision of a world where God rules over all. The demonstration that God reigns even over the raging of the opponents of his people is that his vengeance matches their deeds accordingly.[169] In other words, his judgment is part and parcel of his salvation.

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[166] Thompson, *Revelation*, 75.
[167] Thompson, *Revelation*, 75-76, where he describes 'hard boundaries' in terms of viewing a property fence from inside the property, and 'soft boundaries' in terms of viewing the same fence from an airplane in the context of other fences and properties.
[168] Thompson, *Revelation*, 63, where he demonstrates a greater degree of comfort with recognition of the temporal features of Revelation than most literary-narrative critics.
[169] Thompson, *Revelation*, 65-66.

With respect to how the apparently conflicting images in Revelation operate in the seer's "unbroken vision," Thompson states that any kind of eternal, metaphysical dualism is a view antithetical to John's:

> the kingdom of this world has always been, however implicitly, the kingdom of the creator God...ultimately everything and every power derives from and depends upon God....the seer's vision of the world suggests that it does not contain fundamental conflicts. One element or dimension of the vision is not pitted against another; and terms such as *conflict*, *tension*, and *crisis* do not characterize his vision...in all its aspects the language speaks from unbroken wholeness to unbroken wholeness.[170]

It is important to note in this respect that Thompson does not argue that no crisis actually exists – since he will emphasize the socio-rhetorical interplay between Church and civic communities – but simply that John's "unbroken vision" does not ultimately theologize in a dichotomous framework.

Due to the specifically socio-rhetorical analysis of Thompson's approach to Revelation, he does not provide commentary in the sense that other critics do. It is evident, however, that he is not willing to speak of the images of universal salvation and global judgment in terms of an ongoing conflict or tension. In the absence of his own articulation of this particular issue one might suggest that in his view both images express aspects of God's overall, unbroken reign over the universe as King and Creator. Both communicate this vision in mutually related ways. If they do represent actual eschatological events, they do so primarily as an affirmation of what is already and has always been true and present in God's world. Therefore, while Thompson differs from Barr and Boring in terms of his willingness to acknowledge some temporal elements in John's vision, the predominant spatial framework mutes the temporal elements. The point, from Thompson's perspective, is that John's unified narrative allows the modern reader to experience those ultimate realities presently – as it did for the communities of faith in Asia Minor.

2.5 Richard Bauckham and the "Conversion of the Nations"

Each of the commentators reviewed here contributes to the debate of how the fate of the nations is envisioned in the Apocalypse. While their conclusions vary widely, many recognize the influence of traditions sources – both biblical and post-biblical. As

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[170] Thompson, *Revelation*, 91.

stated in Chapter 1 (above), the work of Richard Bauckham merits special attention for this study. This is so primarily because of his detailed analysis and provocative conclusions, as well as the important questions his work leaves unanswered. Although *The Climax of Prophecy* is now more than a decade old (1993), chapter 9, entitled "The Conversion of the Nations,"[171] represents the most thorough treatment currently available on this specific issue. In his introductory comments to the volume he not only argues for understanding Revelation as a unified and creatively intentional composition,[172] but also briefly assesses the methodologies of both source criticism and literary-narrative criticism. He is deeply critical of source-critics whom he suggests demonstrate "...a crass failure to appreciate the specific literary integrity of the work as it stands."[173] His view of the more recent literary-narrative critical method is that its insights

> are of limited use, since they have been developed with reference to very different kinds of literature. The literary features of Revelation are to some extent indebted to the techniques of contemporary Jewish exegesis and apocalyptic writing, to some extent the distinctive contribution of the author's own literary genius.[174]

Bauckham readily recognizes the important role of apocalyptic traditions and yet differentiates between their value and that of OT traditions on the basis that one cannot be certain of what relationship John or his readers may have had with "non-canonical apocalypses."[175] This leads him to insist that while no direct parallels can be drawn with Revelation from apocalyptic traditions there is need for continued fresh study of them.

According to Bauckham, the task of coming to grips with whether or not Revelation envisions an ultimate eschatological conversion of the nations is determined by recognition of, and attention to, the patterns of John's careful use of the OT: he highlights Ezekiel, Daniel and Psalms 2, 96-100. Specifically, two aspects of John's use of the OT are most remarkable: his ability to weave together interrelated concepts, themes, and motifs from the various OT sources; and, his precise exegesis and

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[171] Bauckham, *Climax*, 238-337.
[172] Bauckham, *Climax*, x.
[173] Bauckham, *Climax*, x, where it is evident that Bauckham's primary interaction with source criticism concerns Charles and Massyngberde-Ford. His lack of reference to important German source-critics leads to his somewhat unbalanced caricature of the discipline as a whole.
[174] Bauckham, *Climax*, x.
[175] Bauckham, *Climax*, xi-xii.

interpretation of significant texts.[176] Bauckham suggests that this attention to the skill and intentional detail reveals John's conviction that an eschatological conversion of the nations will occur. Further, he asserts that Revelation reveals *how* this will take place. He challenges the commonly held view that Revelation envisions the vindication of the people of God through the judgment and destruction of the rogue nations.

Bauckham begins his discussion by pointing out the consistent focus in Revelation upon the peoples of the world through the use of universal terminology. John's consistent use of idioms for the entire world and its inhabitants is a feature which he holds in common with other apocalypses.[177] Three idioms (and their related parallels) occur frequently and are particularly significant. First, "the inhabitants of the earth" is a consistently negative characterization of the people of the world, unlike other apocalypses contemporary to Revelation. Here the usage is not limited to those who physically inhabit the earth but also refers to all those who are opposed to the sovereign rule of God in an ultimately cosmic sense. Second, "(all) the nations" (and corresponding four-fold formula "every tribe, language, people and nation") is a much more flexible and ambiguous designation. It can refer both negatively to those who worship the beast (11.2,18; 20.13), and positively to those who worship God (15.4; 21.24,26; 22.2). Bauckham devotes the final section of this chapter to the four-fold formula. He concludes that every time the formula is used John intentionally crafts it to suit his theological purpose as he moves between images of positive and negative response to the invitation to submit to God's sovereign rule. Finally, the term "the kings of the earth" is used with reference to political and economic systems of the world – language borrowed from the polemic of Psalm 2 and directed at the nations who rage against the sovereign rule of God.[178] Here, as in the first instance, the characterization is predominantly negative and presumes judgment – with the important exception of 21.24.[179]

Bauckham argues therefore that John's consistent use of universal terminology is one of his ways of preparing his hearers/readers for the final salvation of all people as the

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[176] Bauckham, *Climax*, 246, wants to contrast his own sense of John's *intentional* exegetical patterns with the more general characterization among most commentators that John's use of the OT is merely the product of his close familiarity with the language and symbols of the text. This latter view can make John appear somewhat random in his use of the OT.

[177] Bauckham, *Climax*, 239, he cites *1 Enoch*, *2 Baruch* and 4 Ezra as examples.

[178] See *Excursus Three* (below, Chapter 5).

[179] Bauckham, *Climax*, 239-242.

establishment of God's Kingdom. How this will be accomplished is communicated first to John, and then through John to his readers, by means of a scroll from heaven. The introduction of a heavenly scroll comes in 5.1 and 10.2 through an angelic messenger. Bauckham seeks to demonstrate from other relevant literature that they are in fact the same scroll.[180] Most commentators understand the contents of the first scroll to be revealed progressively (6.1-17; 8.1). Bauckham does not believe that to be consistent with the character and usage of any known form of ancient scrolls. Instead he understands the two series of judgments (seven seals; seven trumpets), which separate the initial introduction of the scroll (5.1) from John's reception of it (10.2), to be "necessary preparation" for the contents of the scroll. Because the scroll's contents reveal God's heretofore-secret plan for establishing his Kingdom on earth (namely the conversion of the nations), the *failure* of the judgments alone to bring the nations to repentance (9.20-21) is crucial information. This explains why a third, and presumably more devastating, series of judgments (the seven thunders, 10.3-4) is actually cancelled. Citing the author's heavy dependence upon Daniel (8.26; 12.4-9) and Ezekiel (3.1-3) for the reception of the revelatory scroll, Bauckham asserts that these traditions are significant for the ways John intentionally *departs* from them. The scroll represents a message that remained hidden to OT prophets (Dan 12.8-9; Amos 3.7) but is now revealed to John who takes up the climactic place among the prophets (hence the title of Bauckham's book).[181] John becomes one to whom the entire vista of God's program for establishing his Kingdom on earth is revealed – a culmination of the entire OT prophetic tradition.[182]

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[180] Bauckham relies heavily on F.D. Mazzaferri, *The Genre of the book of Revelation from a Source-Critical Perspective* (BZNW 54; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989). At issue is the use of two related words that are not exactly the same. In 5.1-9, βιβλίον is used (a faded diminutive of βίβλος) and in 10.2,9-10 the more common diminutive form "βιβλαρίδιον" is used. Interestingly, βιβλίον is used in 10.8 and all of the references in chapter 10 have several variant readings. Bauckham cites a story in the *Shepherd of Hermas* where precisely these two words are used interchangeably of the same document or scroll. Further, the OT passage in Ezek 2.8-3.3, which inspires John's vision of the scroll, also uses two different expressions מגלת־צפר and סגלה that might lie behind the double usage in chapters 5 and 10. Recently David Aune (*Revelation*, 558, 570-572) has argued persuasively against Bauckham. In light of the linguistic difficulties associated with this identification, it seems that the burden of proof lies with Bauckham. But see also Gregory Beale, *Revelation* [NICGNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 526-527 who points out nine similarities between the scrolls in chaps 5 and 10.

[181] Cf. Bauckham, *Theology*, 4-5.

[182] The *Pesher Habakkuk* provides evidence for a tradition in Jewish eschatological thought, which believed that some elements of the final establishment of God's Kingdom remained hidden from the prophets (1QpHab 7.1-8 based on Hab 2.2-3a).

In order to demonstrate the ultimately positive message of the scroll, Bauckham points again to the language of Revelation. The term for this final unveiling of God's purpose is εὐαγγελίζομαι, suggesting the content of the scroll to be "good news," announces the salvation that accompanies the arrival of God's Kingdom. This view of the scroll and its contents actually impacts the understanding of the structure of Revelation. Everything before John's reception of the scroll is preparatory; the actual "revelation" is the material from 11.1-22.5. Having argued for the significance of the scroll, Bauckham focuses on 11.1-13 as a crucial text vis-à-vis the conversion of the nations. He suggests that it offers two different but parallel descriptions of the contents of the scroll. Both accounts illustrate how the people of God (the Church) contribute to the realization of God's plan for establishing His Kingdom through faithful witness and patient suffering.

In 11.1-2, John's own prophetic action (recalling Ezekiel's commissioning) represents the Church's role in the world. John is told to measure the sanctuary and altar but to "throw away"[183] the outer court because the nations will defile the holy city for 42 months. Both sanctuary and city are understood to be symbols of the people of God who undergo intense persecution ("trampling") with two significant results: inwardly, the spiritual reality of the Church will flourish and thrive; yet outwardly, it will experience suffering and martyrdom at the hands of the nations. The longer account in 11.3-13, carries essentially the same message but now in a narrative form which Bauckham labels 'parable.' Here two prophets, referred to as "lampstands," dramatically portray the prophetic witness of the people of God. They can be understood to represent the Church on the grounds that their description as lampstands recalls John's earlier use of the term for churches (1.12,20; 2.1,5), and because their number (two) reflects the biblical requirement for evidence to be verified by two witnesses.[184]

By referring to the account as 'parable', Bauckham avoids the difficulty of pressing the details and emphasizes the message regarding the nature and result of the Church's witness to the nations. What emerges is a miraculous but suffering (martyrdom) ministry, which finally brings the nations to acknowledge God's rule and worship him. Bauckham takes the language to imply genuine worship – as opposed to forced or

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[183] Here Bauckham claims to be quite original in recognizing the casting down of the sanctuary in Dan 8.11 as the OT text that provides the conceptual framework for John's prophetic action.
[184] Num 35.30; Deut 17.6; Matt 18.16, among others.

feigned. In 11.13 the same group (οἱ λοίποι) that did not repent in the face of the judgments alone (9.20) now responds in a way consistent with other descriptions of genuine worship both in Revelation and the OT.[185] Bauckham summarizes the parallel between the prophetic witness (suffering/vindication) of the Church and the ministry of Jesus (death/resurrection) as "...the followers of the Lamb participate in his victory, won by His faithful witness, death and vindication, and so give that victory universal effect."[186]

According to Bauckham, with the content of the scroll revealed, John moves to place the role of the Church in the wider, cosmic struggle between God and the forces of evil (chaps 12-14). This struggle, couched in the language of war, reveals that not only are the people of God prophetic witnesses, but they also constitute an army which wages war against the beast. Bauckham then admits that Revelation 14 also provides the first clues that, while the conversion of the nations is firmly in the final eschatological program of God, there also exists the reality that the influence of the beast (spelled out in Rev 13) will lead to the eternal judgment of a certain number among the nations. This is borne out in the announcements of the angels in 14.6-11 (where one is a positive 'gospel' message and the other two are warnings of judgment to the unrepentant), and in the vision of two harvests (14.14-20).

The concept of 'dual harvest', a defining motif for the rest of Revelation according to Bauckham, includes a grain harvest, which is reaped or gathered (14.14-16), and a grape harvest, which is trampled out in a winepress (14.17-20). In the first harvest, the people of God represent a kind of 'first-fruits' of the harvest in that they were initially taken out from the nations (5.9; 14.4) and then made prophetic witnesses to the nations with the purpose of bringing them to God. The second harvest picks up numerous OT traditions of divine judgment and suggests some ongoing rejection of the witness to God that will be judged.[187] The obvious question Bauckham's interpretation must address is, "How can universal language be used of two seemingly mutually exclusive realities?" This tension is further exacerbated by an alternating pattern in the Apocalypse: first, the

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[185] Bauckham, Climax, 279. He makes a point of highlighting the same type of language in OT texts, which in his understanding, anticipate universal worship (Ps 96.7-8; Isa 24.15-16; 42.12).
[186] Bauckham, *Climax*, 283.
[187] Bauckham, *Climax*, 293-296.

victorious song of Moses by the martyrs in 15.2-4 which celebrates *not* the defeat of the nations but rather their conversion;[188] followed by an outpouring of seven plagues and judgment on the unrepentant in 16-19;[189] and concluding with the vision of the New Jerusalem in which all nations worship God.

Bauckham understands this conclusion to prove that the message of the scroll was indeed correct. He suggests first that contrasting universal images cannot be understood in light of each other or over against each other. By the nature of what they are, they function to give full expression to the aspect of the truth they convey. More importantly, he maintains that the order of how the visions are revealed from the scroll is intended to communicate *theological priority*. In the first instance the message is clearly the unmitigated belief that God's Kingdom will be established on earth through the conversion of the nations (11.1-13; 14.6-7,14-16; 15.2-4). Once that has been firmly proclaimed, the second reality of judgment upon the unrepentant is also fairly pictured (14.8-11,17-20; 15.5-18.24; 19.11-21). Then finally, the closing moments of Revelation depict the realized plan of God to establish His Kingdom on earth, which was to some degree hidden from the OT prophets but which John now articulates in all of its power and victory. This order – the success of prophetic witness through suffering, the judgment of the unrepentant, and the final dramatic culmination of God's Kingdom – is intended to leave the reader with the impression, that the picture of universal salvation dominates over the picture of universal judgment. Bauckham states:

> 11.1-13, with its unqualified positive conclusion, gives the positive result of the witness of the martyrs the priority...over the negative. The theme of the conversion of the nations falls out of view after 15.4, while the visions of final judgment take their course, but it returns to prove its theological priority – and therefore eschatological ultimacy – in the vision of the New Jerusalem.[190]

The New Jerusalem (Rev 21) is a picture of the community, which forms the people of God in its final state – a state that includes not only Israel, and eschatological Israel (redeemed out of all nations), but also all nations. Two distinct motifs demonstrate that the promises to Israel and the hope of the Church have not somehow been sidelined

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[188] Bauckham, *Climax*, 299-302, suggests that this song is based on the interpretations of Exod 15 found in Ps 105 and Isa 12.
[189] The reaction of the unrepentant nations here escalates from rejection to outright cursing of 'the God of heaven' (16.11 contrasted with 11.13 where the nations respond in worship of "the God of heaven").
[190] Bauckham, *Climax*, 310.

in favour of a different configuring of the people of God. Bauckham says, "the deliberate mixing of particular and universal imagery throughout the account is a way of maintaining the perspective given in 21.3" (that all nations have been included in the covenant people).[191] John's selected designations, once used in reference to the nations and kings under the rule of Babylon, now comprise the description of those who enjoy the light and presence of the Lamb in the New Jerusalem. Bauckham maintains that this underscores the thorough understanding of John that the most universal hopes of the OT prophets will be *surpassed* in the eschatological establishment of the Kingdom of God.

2.6 Summary of Issues at Stake

The conversation in which commentators (remote and recent) have engaged illustrates that the problem of universal language in Revelation raises methodological issues and produces a wide variety of results. Furthermore, most individual treatments of this issue have not demonstrated a full awareness of the larger conversation. Some preliminary observations and conclusions can be drawn from the data. First, the importance of engagement by John in interpretive strategies and apocalyptic thought present in the 2TP has yet to be fully explored. At several points in the discussion it becomes apparent that commentators disagree on the character and function of apocalyptic traditions. Beyond that, commentators often disagree on how those traditions influenced the composition of Revelation. Recent scholarship has shown that older characterizations of apocalyptic traditions simply fail to recognize and appreciate their diverse nature. Bauckham has primarily engaged Jewish traditions at the linguistic level by citing parallels in terminology. He has not, however, wrestled with the theological influence and implications of those traditions with their varied eschatological expectations (see critique of Bauckham in Chapter 4 [4.2]). Significant parallels to Revelation's use of traditions with universal terminology exist in 2TP literature. Among modern commentators, Aune comes closest to recognizing the divergent streams of expectation (see above, 2.3.5) in early Jewish thought. However, his observations are often general and remain in the realm of plausibility. Earlier source-critics were able to recognize the streams of apocalyptic tradition within the thought world of John, yet their

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[191] Bauckham, *Climax*, 313.

methodology prevents serious consideration of how those traditions might have functioned in a unified, narrative expression of John's convictions.

A further area of debate as yet unresolved is the question of John's 'hermeneutical grid.' Although used somewhat anachronistically, this expression illustrates the divergent ways in which John's use and interpretation of the OT has been understood. Whether stating the issue in terms of his Jewish exegetical techniques (especially Bauckham) or his 'spiritualizing hermeneutic' (Kiddle, Mounce, Müller), this question has yet to be convincingly answered. This issue raises the following questions: (1) What determines the 'divine reversal' of symbols, metaphors and even whole OT passages in Revelation? (2) How is the ultimate vindication of the saints envisioned in John's view of the coming of God's kingdom? Is it through the destruction of the nations of the world or, through their ultimate repentance and conversion? (3) How does John ultimately envision the way in which the people of God are eschatologically constituted? Can a perspective of entrance into the people of God, apart from the guidelines John himself commends to Christians, be maintained?

A third issue raised by literary-narrative method is the question of how symbols and images function in relation to historical circumstances, authorial intent and temporal perspectives. While the characterization of language as "pictorial" helpfully illustrates its immediate impact and effect on an audience, it does not answer the question of what overall framework John intended it to function in. Can a significant temporal element be discerned in John's narrative drama? If so, what are the implications for universally inclusive language and its tension with strict language to the Christian communities?

Finally, there seems to be very little theological reflection among commentators on how John can speak in such universally inclusive terms while at the same time maintaining strict expectations for the Christian communities to whom he writes. John has woven together a vision of the future with broadly inclusive language, and yet warned his hearers/readers that their participation in that future is somehow contingent on their faithfulness and loyalty in the present. How might a truly inclusive view of the conversion of the nations support or undermine John's intent to *motivate* believers in Asia Minor? This question remains largely unanswered. Indeed, "How can the Gospel be strict, yet universal?"

Part B: Analysis of Universal Traditions in Early Jewish Literature and Revelation

CHAPTER THREE:

Early Jewish Literature

3.1 Introduction

The impetus of this study is an attempt to reconcile the universal implications of language depicting the eschatological destiny of the Gentile nations in Revelation, with the strict demands placed on faithful followers of the Lamb. This dynamic tension may be evaluated against the evidence of other contemporary apocalyptic literature in the 2TP in order to determine to what extent the author of Revelation holds interpretive tendencies and exegetical strategies in common with them.[1] From such a comparative analysis we can then attempt a reconstruction of how traditions, which conceptualized the presence of the Gentile nations in the coming age, took shape. Further, those points at which a given document exhibits distinctiveness may provide insight into the perspective and assumptions of its author(s). That is, to isolate peculiar features of John's Apocalypse and to ascertain the conceptual framework within which his visions took shape.

Recent scholarship on the Judaism of the 2TP has demonstrated a wide range of theological thought and expression; it was neither uniform nor static.[2] Not only can one *not* speak of a consensus view in the matrix of early Judaism on many issues in light of this previously underestimated diversity; it is equally important to recognize that the inclusion of biblical traditions in its literary heritage was much more complex and intentional than a rote citation of favorite proof-texts. The evidence of the literature of

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[1] On the presence of a literary milieu in early Judaism termed 'apocalyptic' with basic commonalities yet wide diversity of expression, see Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982), 14-22.

[2] John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 37-38. An earlier, but highly polemical and debated statement against over-generalized characterizations of Judaism in the 2TP, is provided by E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (London: SCM Press, 1977), 20-24 (see also his *Judaism. Beliefs and Practices. 63 BCE-66 CE* [London: SCM Press, 1992]; and, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah* [London: SCM Press, 1990]). For a basic affirmation of Sanders' goal but highly critical evaluation of his methods and assumptions, see Jacob Neusner, *Judaic Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: A Systematic Reply to Professor E.P. Sanders* (SFSHJ 84; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993). He argues for a case-by-case treatment of Jewish documents rather than imposing systematic categories of evaluation that reflect Christian interests. Although ultimately concerned with later Jewish developments, see also Alan F. Segal, *The Other Judaisms of Late Antiquity* (BJS 127; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987).

this period suggests that it was characterized by intentional appropriation of themes, images and key passages in discernible interpretive strategies. These cautions demand that each document relevant to the present study be explored in its own right in two specific directions: first, an exploration of what function biblical traditions regarding the eschatological fate of the Gentile nations played in shaping the overall narrative trajectory of each respective document; and second, to determine how each author may have appropriated those traditions in light of other theological concerns. Such a process takes into consideration not only the presence of particularistic and universally inclusive language; it also allows for the possibility that a narrative shift between the poles of this tension may take place *within* a document. We may ask, does the shape of the narrative itself function to commend a more broadly inclusive conception of the eschaton? If so, how is that shift in perspective rationalized or justified by the author? Asking these questions of apocalyptically oriented documents – assuming they provide evidence that these problems were reflected upon – may inform how one might identify, classify and interpret the appropriation of such traditions in John's Apocalypse.

The argument has been made that within the HB (especially prophetic traditions) one finds the roots of what later became characteristic features of apocalyptic thinking.[3] However, in those moments where some form of dependence on biblical traditions is evident, it is not necessarily accurate to assume exclusive intertextuality or indebtedness as an uncritical default position. To suggest that early Jewish and Christian writers operated in such a biblical vacuum loses sight of the dynamic exchange of ideas and evolution of those traditions that characterized this vibrant literary and theological milieu. Thus, a myopic view of the influence of biblical traditions on Revelation and other early Jewish apocalypses can lose sight of the potential for significant development in the interpretation of those traditions. John's use of a contemporary literary form, the genre of 'apocalypse,'[4] is the most obvious evidence that he inherits and makes use of a vibrant

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[3] Paul Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology* (rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 27-31, but on the inadequacies of his monolithic position see Collins, *Imagination*, 23-25,38-39.

[4] For the standard definition of apocalyptic literature see John J. Collins, "Introduction: The Morphology of a Genre," in *Semeia* 14 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1979): 1-20 (esp. 9). See also the further qualification of David Hellhom, "The Problem of Apocalyptic Genre and the Apocalypse of John," in *Semeia* 36 (Decatur, GA: Scholars Press, 1986): 13-64 (esp. 27).

tradition.[5] The present study will keep important biblical traditions in view, which most fully articulate positive universal language with respect to the ultimate fate of the nations while also maintaining an awareness of how those traditions were being interpreted and shaped by John's contemporaries. As a representative sample of early Jewish literature, which presents special affinities to some of the characteristics and tensions inherent in the eschatological perspective of Revelation, this study will examine Tobit,[6] the *Similitudes of Enoch* (*1 Enoch* 37-71), 4 Ezra, and the *Animal Apocalypse* (*1 Enoch* 85-90). In light of the overall importance of the Dead Sea Scrolls to virtually all areas of biblical studies today, a brief assessment of their importance for the present study is necessary.

Excursus One: Eschatological Dualism at Qumran, and the Fate of the Nations[7]

With the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls at Qumran, an important new horizon of literary and archeological material was made available to students of the New Testament. After more than a half-century since the original discoveries, this material has yielded vital information regarding religious, literary, and social practices among certain groups within early Judaism in Palestine during the 2TP.[8] Both the study of the development of NT theology and that of the social and religious practices of the earliest Christian communities, owe a great deal to the insights scholars have made on the basis of these finds.[9] It is a mark of their relative importance that no meaningful work in NT studies now proceeds without awareness of, and interaction with, the Dead Sea materials.

Several recent studies have demonstrated the potentially fruitful relationship between the study of the scrolls and the Apocalypse of John.[10] For the present study, the issue of their relevance determines the degree of interaction with the Dead Sea materials. Do the ideology and

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[5] Critics suggest a degree of circular reasoning, however, pointing out that Revelation is the earliest document self-designated as 'apocalypse'.

[6] While the book of Tobit does not fit the genre of 'apocalypse' as such, features of apocalyptic thinking are nevertheless apparent (see further comments below, section 2.2).

[7] All translations are based on the critical texts published in *Discoveries in the Judean Desert* (hereafter *DJD*).

[8] Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; 2000), 4, succinctly states: "The Qumran texts, fragmentary though many of them are, supply us with firsthand information about the Palestinian Jewish matrix out of which early Christianity and its canonical writings emerged."

[9] For an important statement on the value of the findings at Qumran and the virtual explosion of interest in them from NT scholars, see Martin Hengel, "Aufgaben der neutestamentlichen Wissenschaft," *NTS* 40 (1994), 321-357. See also, James Vanderkam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 159-185. At the same time it must be noted that the precise relationship between the early Christian movement and what we know of the community at Qumran is a complex and highly debated issue. See J. Charlesworth, *Jesus Within Judaism* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1998), 54-61, for a helpful review of some of the extreme perspectives on this issue.

[10] See for example, R. Bauckham, "The Apocalypse as a Christian War Scroll," in *Climax*, 210-237; D.E. Aune, "Qumran and the Book of Revelation," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after 50 Years: A Comprehensive Assessment*, 2 vols (P. Flint and J. Vanderkam, eds.; Leiden: Brill, 1998-99), 2:622-648; and, James Vanderkam and Peter Flint, *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, (San Francisco: Harper, 2002), 361-378. See also in a more general sense the commentary of Aune (1997) reviewed above in chap. 2.

worldview they represent provide parallels to the particular interest of this investigation of Jewish eschatological expectation regarding the fate of the Gentiles?[11] What patterns of depicting the future age emerge from the material actually attributable either to an Essene community at Qumran or in the wider religious traditions represented by these collected documents?[12] What interpretive strategies are employed in these documents with respect to biblical traditions that deal with the final fate of the nations? In light of several important features reflecting the context of the community at Qumran, the value of these texts for the present study cannot merely be assumed but must be demonstrated.

Despite the difficulties inherent in our present nomenclature for extra-biblical writings from the 2TP, the documents represented by the manuscript finds at Qumran may be broadly classified in several categories.[13] These include: biblical writings (including a number of phylacteries); previously known apocryphal and pseudepigraphal writings (Tobit; Sirach; *Jubilees*; *The Books of Enoch*);[14] previously unknown but "pre-Essene" literature (such as, for example, *Temple Scroll*; *Genesis Apocryphon*; *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*); and distinctly sectarian (Essene) documents (for example, portions of the *Community Rule*; *Directive of the Teacher to Jonathan*). These last two categories are particularly tendentious. There is as yet no consensus regarding what material originated from within the community.[15] Many of the previously unknown documents once thought to represent the sectarian perspective of the community now appear to reflect an older, broader base in early Judaism.[16] Therefore, while some Qumran manuscripts represent literature from the 2TP under consideration in this chapter (i.e. Tobit, *Animal Apocalypse* [*1 Enoch* 85-90]), the community may have valued and stored

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[11] See Chapter 1 (above) for the criterion adopted here in determining which documents provide an interpretive literary matrix from which to evaluate Revelation: that those documents chosen reflect a similar tension as one finds in John's Apocalypse between narrow (particularistic) descriptions of the faithful community alongside visions of eschatological salvation that employ universal language or traditions.

[12] On the Qumran community as an Essene group, see Frank M. Cross, *The Ancient Library of Qumran* (3rd ed.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 55-66.

[13] Hartmut Stegemann, *The Library of Qumran* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 80-138, provides an introductory overview of some of the most significant documents in each of these categories. His classification is undoubtedly helpful as a general paradigm; however, the certainty with which he concludes that certain material either could or could not have represented the community's own literary agenda seems overly optimistic.

[14] Peter Flint, "'Apocrypha,' other previously known writings, and 'Pseudepigrapha' in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years*, 2:24-66 (esp. 24-34), has suggested a broad re-classification using the prevailing terminology: (1) 'Apocrypha': those documents that are Jewish works of the Second Temple Period *and* appear in some but not all Christian Old Testament traditions (thus not in the Hebrew Bible); and, (2) 'Pseudepigrapha': those writings that obviously demonstrate the literary convention of pseudepigraphy.

[15] For a thorough evaluation of the difficulties in assigning texts and traditional developments to the actual community at Qumran, and an outline of criteria for Qumran and non-Qumran documents, see Armin Lange and Hermann Lichtenberger, "Qumran," in *TRE* 28 (1997): 45-79. For a measured reflection of this problem as it relates to 1QS in particular see L.T. Stuckenbruck, "Wisdom and Holiness at Qumran: Strategies for Dealing with Sin in the *Community Rule*," in *Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?: Wisdom in the Bible, the Church and the world* (Stephen C. Barton, ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 47-60 (esp. 48-49). In this regard it appears that the approach of Stegemann (see footnote below) is aware of this difficulty but perhaps too minimalist.

[16] Stegemann, *Library*, 136-138, rightly challenged the "dominant view" that "everything new for us today from the finds comes from the Essenes, probably even from the inhabitants of Qumran" by suggesting that the criteria should rather be based on what can be conclusively proved to be Essene in origin.

them without necessarily endorsing them in every point theologically or ideologically.[17] Their presence in the library of Qumran alone is not proof that the eschatological visions in these documents (which include a variety of forms of participation by Gentiles, as we will see) represented the expectations of the community. In fact, those Dead Sea documents in which thematic contact can be demonstrated with the interests of the present study suggest precisely the opposite to be true. Material that is either attributable to authorship from within the community or shows the marks of development or redaction by members of the community, reflects a narrowing, sectarian perspective.[18] For several reasons, this tendency significantly limits the overall usefulness of material distinctive of the Essene community at Qumran for the present study.

A growing number of scholars have described the community at Qumran as 'apocalyptic' – though not without debate.[19] As a distinctive feature of the community's perception of its own present reality, a sharp dualism characterizes those writings that can be demonstrated either to originate in the community, or to have undergone some redaction in its hands.[20] As we will see, the radical dualism evident in these instances sets this material apart from other voices in early Jewish literature that could envisage the events associated with a final day of judgment in a universal/particularistic tension. Such use and appropriation of biblical traditions regarding the final fate of the nations simply does not appear in the material attributable to the community. As we will see, the interpretive framework at Qumran within which such biblical traditions were understood is much closer in kind to the early stages of targumic thought with its highly pejorative attitude toward the nations.[21] This dualistic worldview is most apparent in the way in which the community rationalized the presence of evil in the created order (*Treatise on the Two Spirits*, 1QS 3.12-4.26),[22] and in its conceptualization of the final eschatological battle between good and evil (*War Scroll*, 1QM).[23]

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[17] Craig Evans and Peter Flint, eds., *Eschatology, Messianism and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 6-7, make the observation in the introduction to this volume that "Not everything found in the Judean caves necessarily represents the views of the community at Qumran. Some ideas reflect "minority opinions," while others may have been widely held at different periods in the history of the community."

[18] Lange and Lichtenberger, "Qumran," 45-79; C.A. Newsom, "'Sectually Explicit' Literature from Qumran," in *The Hebrew Bible and its Interpreters* (W.H. Propp, B. Halpern, and D.N. Freedman, eds.; Winona, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 167-187; also, Stegemann, *Library*, 104-136.

[19] Frank M. Cross, *Ancient Library*, 66-87; and, John J. Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: Routledge, 1997), 9-11.

[20] Collins, *Apocalypticism*, 38-51. Jörg Frey, "Different Patterns of Dualistic Thought in the Qumran Library: Reflections on their Background and History," in *Legal Texts and Legal Issues: Proceedings of the Second Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies, Cambridge 1995, Published in Honor of Joseph M. Baumgarten* (M. Bernstein, F.G. Martinez and J. Kampen eds.; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 275-335. Frey proposes no less than ten (10) forms of dualism in the Qumran writings.

[21] This is more fully explored in the particular case of how Isa 60 is used in Rev 21; *Tg. Isa.*; and 1QM (see below, chapter 5).

[22] Collins, *Apocalypticism*, 43, describes the *Treatise on the Two Spirits* as "arguably the most distinctive text in the entire corpus of the scrolls" but notes the lack of agreement among scholars regarding "where it should be located in the development of the ideology of the sect." J. Charlesworth, ed., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek Texts with English Translations* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 15, suggested that 1QS represented the quintessential teaching of the Teacher of Righteousness, while Stegemann, *Library*, 108-110, however, concludes that "this two-spirit teaching in terms of the history of religions is supplied by the more than 3000 Assyrian and Babylonian divinities, good and evil, which exiled Mesopotamian Judaism reconsecrated into hierarchies of angels and integrated into the biblical view of creation. The strongly dualistic world-principle itself goes back to ancient Iranian influences." In another context, John Collins outlined the roots of dualism in the Iranian eschatology of Zoroaster as originally suggested by Norman Cohn ("The Expectation of the End in the Dead Sea Scrolls,"

In the case of *Two Spirits*, we find the underlying presupposition that the world is constructed in equal measures of light and darkness (i.e. good and evil). From an anthropological perspective, the author(s) asserts that God has placed "two spirits" within man – "*they are the spirits of truth and deceit*" (3.18-19 הנה רוחות האמת והעול). These two spirits within man generate two distinct classes of humanity (3.19-21 where the term תולדות "generations" suggests the idea of "lines of descent;" cf. 4.15) which are alternately called "generations of truth / sons of justice / sons of light" and antithetically "generations of deceit / sons of deceit / sons of darkness." A second, cosmological expression of this division of humanity operates at the same time, however; the author(s) suggests that both a "Prince of Light" and an opposing "Angel of Darkness" hold dominion over the previously described anthropological categories (3.20-22).[24] Interestingly, the *Treatise on the Two Spirits* demarcates this dualistic configuration in two ways: (1) by insisting that all activity of "light" and "darkness" operate under the larger framework of God's sovereign control of the universe (3.15); and, (2) by constraining its description of the human condition temporally with an 'End' in view: "*until the moment of his visitation*" (3.18; cf. 3.14 "*the visitation of their punishment*;" 3.23 "*until his moment*," 4.11-12 "*the visitation*;" 4.18-19 "*the appointed time of the visitation*;" 4.26 "*the visitation*"). One qualification of this scenario must be made: the author(s) acknowledges that the dualistic distinction he has made between categories of humanity is also true on an individual (spiritual or psychological) level within each human heart. He allows that "*Until now the spirits of truth and injustice feud in the heart of man...*" (4.23). This admission signals the recognition that in spite of the community's emphasis on purity and separation from the "sons of deceit," it nevertheless grappled with the issue of how to deal with sin within the community.[25] In his celebration of the final triumph of truth over deceit the author(s) envisions the time when God "*...will purify for himself the structure of man, ripping out all spirit of injustice from the innermost part of this flesh...*" (4.19-22).

How this 'End' is envisioned with respect to those outside the community is significant. For each 'spirit' that resides within humanity, extended descriptions of their characteristics (4.2-8: "sons of truth;" 4.9-14: "sons of darkness") are provided along with their respective destinies (reward / punishment). These descriptions provide the rationale and background against which the authors' views on eternal destiny become apparent – these two divisions are set on irreconcilably divergent trajectories (4.15-26). In fact, "*God has sorted them into equal parts until the last time, and has put everlasting loathing between (their) divisions...(There exists) a violent conflict in respect of all their decrees since they can not walk together*" (4.16-18). Collins

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in Evans and Flint, *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 74-90 [esp. 74-75]). Further, with the presence of similar, less-developed ideas in *Ben Sira*, for example, our reception of *Two Spirits* is best understood not in terms of a document composed by the community, but rather as it was integrated into the *Community Rule*.

[23] Several scholars have recognized elements of both 1QS and 1QM as the primary examples of the anthropological, eschatological, and cosmological dualism characteristic of the Essene community at Qumran. See Frey, "Dualistic Thought," 277, who points especially to 1QS 3.13-4.26 and 1QM 1, 13, and 15-19; Vanderkam, *Scrolls Today*, 110-111, 182-183; and, Collins, *Apocalypticism*, 45-51, who also highlights some of the dualistic features of the *Damascus Document* (CD).

[24] Collins, *Apocalypticism*, 45-47. These angelic forces, while so named here in 1QS, appear elsewhere in the scrolls in a variety of explicit and implied antithetical constructs: Michael / Belial (1QM); Prince of Light / Prince of Darkness; Prince of the Community, the Branch of David / the leader of the *Kittim* (4Q285); Melchizedek / Melchiresha (4QAmram).

[25] Stuckenbruck, "Wisdom and Holiness at Qumran," 57-59, points out that the blame for this internal struggle with sin is placed with the "Angel of Darkness." He further cites as witness to this internal struggle within the human heart, the fragmentary findings in Cave 4 at Qumran. There the fragments designated 4Q186 advance a nine-part scheme for human composition in which we find descriptions of people who are six parts light and three parts darkness, eight parts darkness and one part light, and eight parts light and one part darkness.

observes that in a highly charged sectarian context this dualistic framework for understanding the world and evil would provide assurance to the believer "that God is in control, despite current appearances to the contrary." He states further "It is reasonable to suppose that the sharp separation between light and darkness posited in the Instruction on the Two Spirits reflects the alienation of the Dead Sea sect from the world around it and its decision to separate itself from the majority of people (4QMMT C 7; cf. 1QS 8.13-14)."[26] The conclusion of the matter for the author(s) of *Two Spirits* is that the history of humanity is bound up in the destinies of these two divergent paths. To that effect he hints at the anticipated final conflict in military terms: "*in their two divisions all their armies* (כול צבאותם) *have a share for their generations...*" (4.15). We now turn to the most explicit description of this eschatological expression of dualistic thought at Qumran.

The second sphere of an overtly dualistic worldview at Qumran under consideration here – the eschatological war – is most clearly represented in 1QM. As the inevitable consequence of the dualistic framework described above, it anticipated a final conflict with, and ultimate victory over, the "sons of darkness" by the "sons of light." Although the distinction between good and evil on an anthropological level was at times described in terms of national or ethnic boundaries (thus borrowing the imagery of biblical traditions, see Chapter 5, *Excursus Four*), these lines of distinction were most often drawn even more narrowly.[27] In the case of 1QM, we find this narrowly conceived depiction of the faithful community: the "sons of the light" are defined as those within the Qumran community (see 1QM 1.2 "*The sons of Levi, the sons of Judah and the sons of Benjamin, the exiled of the desert* [גולת המדבר], *will wage war...*").[28] Thus a stark and irreconcilable contrast with respect to the "sons of darkness" (כתים *Kittim*) as opponents of the faithful is consistently maintained. In early lines of the *War Scroll* we find a merging of select traditional depictions of the opponents of the faithful of Israel with those that seem to reflect the perspective of the desert sect. In column 1 alone, these opponents include Edom, Moab, the sons of Ammon, Philistia, and the sons of Japhet. Conversely, the author(s) also includes the following 'Qumran' labels: "the sons of darkness, the army of Belial;" "the Kittim of Ashur;" and, "the violators of the covenant." This final label may reflect the sectarian dissatisfaction with Jewish aristocracy and religious leadership (see above, fn. 27).

How the *War Scroll* envisions the ultimate destiny of these opponents is both clear and, at the same time, influenced at various points in the document by a variety of traditional depictions.[29] Although columns 1, 15-19 appear to derive from different authorship than columns 2-9, there is no mistaking how the author(s) envisaged the final eschatological battle to end – nothing but utter annihilation of all opponents will do (1.6-7 "*g[reat] panic [among] the sons of Japhet, Ashur shall fall and there will be no help for him; the rule of the Kittim will come to an end, wickedness having been defeated, with no remnant remaining, and there will be no escape for [any of the sons] of darkness*"). The battle itself is described as a series of seven military

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[26] Collins, *Apocalypticism*, 44-45 (here a plausible argument for how *Two Spirits* was used by the Qumran group).

[27] Collins, *Apocalypticism*, 91. Evans and Flint, *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 8-9, make the observation that messianic hope at Qumran similarly anticipated "a great victory over wicked Rome and the wicked of Israel."

[28] This description of the faithful is virtually repeated in 1.3 "*when the exiled sons of light return from the desert...*"

[29] Both the numerous fragmentary witnesses to more than one recension of the *War Scroll* at Qumran, as well as the diversity of traditional sources and apparent redaction internally, have led most commentators to consider 1QM to reflect a complex compositional history. On this see, Stegemann, *Library*, 102-104; and, Collins, *Apocalypticism*, 94-95. Collins cites Y. Yadin (*The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962]) as one scholar who has attempted to maintain the unity of 1QM.

encounters – each side will appear victorious in three "lots," but in the seventh lot "*God's great hand will subdue [Belial and al]l the angels of his dominion...for the destruction of the sons of darkness*" (1.14-16). Following the ritual prescriptions for warfare (columns 2-9) and a series of prayers and theological reflections on the battle at hand (columns 10-14), the actual language of "wicked nations" appears in the climactic description of the battle's conclusion (columns 15-19): "*For God's lot there will be everlasting redemption and destruction for all the wicked nations*" (15.1-2; cf. 15.12-13; 16.1; 17.1; 18.12). Nowhere is this dualistic portrayal of certain, predetermined destiny for either side softened. In those places where biblical traditions are employed which, in other early Jewish writings can appear more positive, the communicative strategy necessitated by the radically dualistic worldview of the community mitigates against such an appropriation (again, see the example of the use of Isa 60 in column 12 and 19 evaluated below in chap.5).

Many significant parallels exist between the Apocalypse of John and various features of the eschatology and messianism found at Qumran. However, the use of biblical traditions that envision the future salvation or participation of Gentile nations in the eschaton does not appear to be among them. In light of the dualism which characterizes the eschatology and sectarian polemic in the writings from Qumran, it should not be surprising that very little evidence of a tension created by universalistic visions of salvation can be found. Not even hypothetical scenarios designed to illustrate the mercy of God or buttress a given author's "agenda of vindication" can legitimately be spoken of. For an Essene community that viewed itself as the *remnant* of Israel – or perhaps even the "true" Israel – no consummation of the present age that did not envisage their complete vindication and the utter destruction of their opponents was ultimately palatable. It seems clear that bound up with the overall cry for vindication on the part of the faithful community, was a fierce insistence on purity and faithfulness to the covenant. In light of the Qumran community's critique of much of Palestinian Judaism in its time, it is not surprising to find little or no reflection on whether the ultimate vindication of this isolated community could include the conversion of Gentile nations.

Reaching this preliminary conclusion, however, leaves open the possibility of comparative evaluation of those instances where the writers from Qumran do employ relevant biblical traditions. Texts taken into consideration later in this study include the use of Isaiah 60 in the *War Scroll* and Psalm 2 in *Florilegium* (4Q174; 4Q177; 4Q178). Such texts may have functioned in a more positive manner in their HB context – or later been appropriated in more positive ways in certain contemporary Jewish circles. In the hands of the Qumran community, however, they reflect a much narrower hermeneutical agenda. This, too, allows us to better identify the communicative strategy of John's Apocalypse against the variegated matrix of Jewish thought in the 2TP.

3.2 Tobit

3.2.1 Introduction

The book of Tobit is a work of fiction that illustrates and seeks to inspire idealistic Jewish piety in the context of the hostile conditions of exile.[30] It represents an

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[30] Carey Moore, *Tobit* (AB 40A; New York: Doubleday, 1996) and Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Tobit* (CEJL; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003). Moore (*Tobit*, 9-11) summarizes the general consensus that the book of Tobit is neither historically and geographically accurate, nor rationally believable at certain points. Fitzmyer (31-33) lists nine examples of elements of the narrative, which are either erroneous or improbable in light of historical evidence yet provide certain religious or literary credibility to the document. However, see also Alan Millard, "Judith, Tobit, Ahiqar and History," in *New Heaven and New Earth Prophecy and*

important intermediary witness to the development of biblical traditions regarding the eschatological fate of the nations. Unlike the majority of Jewish literature relevant to this discussion Tobit is not an apocalyptic book.[31] On the one hand, Tobit operates within a well-defined and strictly enforced set of social and religious boundaries for Jews living in the Diaspora. On the other hand, it also contains one of the most optimistic statements regarding the inclusion of the Gentile nations in Israel's ultimate vindication as God's chosen people.

Despite the absence of an apocalyptic framework, however, scholars have recognized the presence of motifs and rhetorical devices in Tobit 13-14 that are characteristic of the apocalyptic genre.[32] The suggestion has even been made that the prayer of chapter 13 is the prototype of an 'eschatological psalm' genre.[33] Since the date of Tobit's composition is estimated in the period just prior to the formal emergence of apocalyptic writing,[34] one may suggest that it stands as a link between the era of exilic prophets and that of the apocalyptic visionaries. These early apocalyptic features in Tobit contribute to an understanding of the development of biblical traditions regarding the eschatological fate of the nations in early Jewish thought.

3.2.2 Textual Issues: The Unity and Authenticity of 13.1-14.15

The textual history of the book of Tobit is extraordinarily complex. Questions regarding the textual unity and literary integrity of the final two chapters of Tobit significantly affect a study concerned with possible thematic conflicts and narrative or theological developments in the book.[35] The place of these chapters in the present form of the text significantly inform a narrative understanding of the book's developing plot, and

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the Millenium: Essays in Honour of Anthony Gelston (VTSup 77; ed. P.J. Harland and C.T.R. Hayward; Leiden: Brill, 1999): 195-203, for a measured evaluation of the use of historical data by the author of Tobit.

[31] See the lists of Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 14-15, and Collins, *Imagination*, 2-8, who mentions Tobit only in connection with its inclusion of a testament in 14.1 (128).

[32] These apocalyptic features will be listed and discussed in the following section (see below).

[33] David Flusser, "Psalms, Hymns and Prayers" in *JWSTP*, 555-556.

[34] Most scholars date the early *Vorlagen* of Tobit to the mid 3rd cent. B.C.E. See Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 3-17.

[35] The critical text of *Tobit* is fraught with difficulty due to the presence of several major recensions of varying length and numerous textual variants. A case for considering the text of Tobit in a synoptic fashion is made by Tobias Nicklas and Christian Wagner, "Thesen zur Textlichen Vielfalt im Tobitbuch," *JSJ* 34 (2003): 141-159. Recently, a major critical edition of all extant texts and manuscripts has filled this lacuna admirably; see, L.T. Stuckenbruck, Stuart Weeks and Simon Gathercole, *The Book of Tobit: Texts from the Principal Ancient and Medieval Traditions. With Synopsis, Concordances, and Annotated Texts in Aramaic, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and Syriac* (FSBP; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004).

serve as examples of developing biblical traditions. Do these two chapters belong to the same hand as the first twelve chapters, or are they best understood as an (perhaps even more than one) addition? Arguments in favor of reading chapters 13 and 14 as later additions have generally reflected one or both of the following proposals: either, that the diverse material they incorporate permits a reconstruction of the potential stages of composition of Tobit; or, that the use of ancient literary sources in the narrative construction/plot development of the document best explains their content.

In the first place, source critics have suggested as many as four (4) stages of composition reflecting a chronology that has generally followed the narrative progression (plot) of the book.[36] In such treatments, chapters 13 and 14 have been suggested to represent the final (i.e. latest) addition. Interestingly, this conclusion has often been based on the presence of a relatively developed perspective of the vision of the New Jerusalem – and in particular, the presence of Gentile nations converted to the worship of Israel's God.[37] Such a theological feature, however, must finally be weighed against both external and internal textual evidence. The second half of the twentieth century witnessed a majority consensus among scholars, notwithstanding the aforementioned, in favor of the overall unity of the book. The most compelling arguments against radical source-critical hypotheses include two major points: first, the discoveries at Qumran of five manuscripts of Tobit[38] that contain fragments corresponding to the final two chapters;[39] Moore states "one of the unquestionable benefits of the Qumran texts of Tobit...is that they seem to solve the long-debated question of whether the eschatological chapters of Tobit 13 and 14 were an original part of the text or were later added."[40]

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[36] The most insistent voices along these lines in recent years come from Paul Deselaers, *Das Buch Tobit: Studien zu seiner Entstehung, Komposition und Theologie* (Göttingen: VandenHoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), and Martin Rabenau *Studien zum Buch Tobit* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994).

[37] F. Zimmermann, *The Book of Tobit: An English Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (JAL; New York: Harper & Row, 1958), 24-27, argued for a post 70 C.E. date for chapters 13 and 14.

[38] These include four Aramaic fragments (4Q196-199) and one Hebrew fragment (4Q200), see Magen Broshi, et al. eds., *DJD XIX: Parabiblical Texts, Part 2* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 1-76. Joseph Fitzmyer is editor of these fragments that were originally identified and classified by J.T. Milik.

[39] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Aramaic and Hebrew Fragments of Tobit from Qumran Cave 4," *CBQ 57*, (1995): 657-8. Here Fitzmyer builds on the work of J.T. Milik and provides the following breakdown: (1) 4Q196 contains 13.6-12; 13.12-14.3; 14.7; (2) 4Q198 contains 14.2-6 and possibly 14.10; (3) 4Q199 contains 14.10; and, (4) 4Q200 contains 12.20-13.4; 13.13-14; 13.18-14.3.

[40] Carey Moore, "Scholarly Issues in the Book of Tobit before Qumran and After: An Assessment," *JSP 5* (1989), 77, and Fitzmyer, "Fragments," 658-661. While conclusively providing much earlier evidence for

Second, despite obvious changes in tone and perspective in the final two chapters, several features suggest continuity with the rest of the document.[41] These points of similarity include: the consistent use of language (divine names, descriptions of Israel's past failures and present exilic state), literary devices (prayer, inclusio), theological emphases (repentance, divine judgment and mercy, joy) and plot resolution (Tobit's testament, the fall of Nineveh). Indeed the prominence of the theme of exile and return throughout the book seems to make chapters 13 and 14 indispensable.[42] Further, Fitzmyer has pointed out that Tobit's words (or songs) of praise simply highlight his obedience to the command of Raphael to "praise God at all times" (12.17,20) in light of the preceding events.[43] These features of continuity suggest that the major changes in the final two chapters are best regarded as a product of the developing plot – specifically its resolution and the corresponding change in perspective of the protagonist – than the presence of conflicting sources. Upon further examination one might even suggest that the speech of Raphael in chapter 12 foreshadows the broader themes of the final two chapters.[44]

It is worth mentioning that the issue of whether chapters 13 and 14 were originally composed together is also somewhat problematic. Chapter 14 has been criticized for its repetitive tendencies. In favor of its authenticity Moore points out the logical need for Tobit's restated testament in light of the time and events that take place between his first testament (4.1-21) and his actual death (14.11b), as well as a distinct element of expansion or clarification of key themes of chapter 13.[45] Perhaps even more significantly, Di Lella convincingly makes the case that 14.3b-11 represents an important

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Tobit as a complete document and greatly reducing the likelihood of compositional stages, this alone does not eliminate that possibility altogether.

[41] Moore, *Tobit*, 22, argues that "There are...some literary and theological grounds for considering these chapters an integral part of the book..."

[42] Benedikt Otzen, *Tobit and Judith* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 54, and Moore, *Tobit*, 284.

[43] Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 304,317.

[44] S. Weitzman, "Allusion, Artiface and Exile in the Hymn of Tobit" *JBL 115* (1996): 49-61. Weitzman argues for the literary and thematic connectedness of Tobit 12 & 13 in light of their similarities to Deuteronomy 31-32, thus providing a case in point for understanding chapter 13 as part of an original literary construction. But see also Helen Schüngel-Straumann, *Tobit* (HTKAT; Frieburg im Briesgau: Verlag Herder, 2000), 161-162, who argues that, in spite of Weitzman's convincing analysis, the function ("die späteren Generationen zu belehren"), form ("mehr den späten Psalmen und Weisheit verwandt als die frühen Gebete der Hauptpersonen in Kap.3"), and tone ("Gattungsmässig ist es nicht mehr Klage aus einer Notsituation, sondern Lobpreis und Dank für die überwundene Not) of this final prayer suggests its later addition to the text. Against this, however, see the arguments below for the role of transformation in main character and, subsequently, the narrative as a whole.

[45] Moore, *Tobit*, 293-294.

appropriation of the motif of "Deuteronomic retribution" (esp. Deut 31-32, see more below).[46] Fitzmyer's agreement that "This aspect of the Book of Tobit saves it from being an interesting romance developed outside the mainstream of Jewish life," notwithstanding its overstatement, illustrates the importance of chapter 14 to the theology of Tobit.[47]

Second, older theories of multiple sources often identified one or more ancient secular folk tales, which, they believed, had been reworked and made to fit the narrative by the author (or subsequent redactor).[48] With regard to the influence of ancient folktales upon the narrative structure of Tobit, however, Moore observes:

> Now, there is much less emphasis on Tobit's foreign cloth (i.e. the secular folk tales) and much more on its biblical and post-biblical patterns. In fact, it is now seriously questioned whether the author of Tobit actually utilized some of those ancient secular folk tales.[49]

In this regard, Soll's study of the 'heroic fairy tale' background to Tobit has concluded that regardless of literary background possibilities, the narrative of Tobit as it stands represents a coherent unified work with its own purpose and integrity.[50]

While all of this may allow one to speak of Tobit's literary unity, it should not minimize the exceptional nature of the final two chapters. There are unquestionably new theological ideas introduced in 13.1-14.7 in relation to the rest of the book. Beyond the previously mentioned classification of chapter 13 by Flusser, George Nickelsburg identified several 'apocalyptic' features in the final two chapters. These include the

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[46] Alexander A. Di Lella, "The Deuteronomic Background of the Farewell Discourse in Tob 14.3-11," *CBQ* 41 (1979): 380-389.

[47] Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 324.

[48] See G.W.E. Nickelsburg, "The Search for Tobit's Mixed Ancestry: A Historical and Hermeneutical Odyssey," in *RevQ* 17 (1996): 339-349, and more recently, R. Spencer, "The Book of Tobit in Recent Research," in *CurBS* 7 (1999): 147-180. Suggestions for possible mythic and folkloric backgrounds have included: (1) "The Grateful Dead," (2) "The Monster in the Bridal Chamber," (3) "Tractate of Khons," and (4) "The Tale of Ahiqar." Only the last of these can be demonstrated to have had any significant influence on the narrative of Tobit. A recent discussion between MacDonald and Nickelsburg has explored the possible influence of Homer's *Odyssey* upon the compositional strategy of the author of Tobit. Further, Nickelsburg also finds parallels between Tobiah's search for a bride (Tobit 2-12) and the Genesis 27-35 account of the search for a bride for Jacob. For this discussion see chaps 1 and 2 in *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity* (ed. Dennis R. MacDonald; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999) 11-55.

[49] Moore, "Scholarly Issues," 74.

[50] William Soll, "Tobit and Folklore Studies, With Emphasis on Propp's Morphology," in *SBLSP* 27 (1988): 39-53.

presence of divine names with universalistic connotations (13.6-11) and the description of a denouement with heavy universalistic overtones (13.11-18; 14.4-7).[51]

Specific instances of these descriptive and theological adjustments include: (1) in place of present-day Jerusalem (1.4, 6-7 and in retrospect: 13.9; 14.4), one finds the New Jerusalem with rebuilt temple (13.10,16-17; 14.5,7); (2) instead of the chosen people scattered in exile (1.1-3,10; 2.2; 3.4,15a; 7.3), the exiles are gathered back home (13.5,13; 14.5,7); (3) the introduction of new divine names;[52] and (4) the emphasis on strict separation by social and religious boundaries (1.9-10; 4.12-13,19; 5.9,11-15) is replaced with the ultimate conversion and inclusion of the Gentile nations in the worship of Israel's God (13.8,11; 14.6).[53] The hopes expressed here by the author reflect a significant theological 'move' within the document itself and also represent the most explicit post-biblical articulation of deutero-Isaianic universalism in early Jewish literature.[54]

3.2.3 Literary Context and Narrative Development: Intentional Boundary Shift?

The narrative structure of Tobit, while complex enough to follow a developing plot on several fronts, is chiefly concerned with its protagonist.[55] In the context of exile, Tobit is presented as a model of faithfulness and purity for all Jews living in the Diaspora. This is achieved by the author's emphasis on Tobit's consistent practice of "almsgiving" (ἐλεημόσυνη)[56] and his ability to maintain social and religious boundaries

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[51] George W. Nickelsburg, "Stories of Biblical and Post-Biblical Times," in *JWSTP*, 46.

[52] Schüngel-Straumann, *Tobit*, 170-172, provides an excursus on "Gottesbezeichnungen in Tob 13 mit Blick auf die übrigen Gebete im Tobitbuch" which points out the differences in the use of divine names – especially the tendency in later Judaism to use genitival qualifiers with יהוה / κύριος. Her conclusion, however, that this proves the later authorship or redaction of chaps 13 and 14 is unconvincing on the grounds that both the literary form and the broader thematic concerns of these final two chapters could equally account for these nuances of the divine name. B. Chilton, "God as Father," in *The Pseudepigrapha in Early Biblical Interpretation* (Charlesworth & Evans, eds; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 166-167, notes the similarities between the use of divine names in Tob 13.1,3-4 and NT usage.

[53] To be fair to the text, the language of "all people" in 13.8 and "many nations" in 13.11 is made explicit by "the nations in the whole world" in 14.6.

[54] See the references to Isaianic material below (3.2.4).

[55] Nickelsburg, "Stories," 43, states "A key to our understanding of the author's situation and purpose is to be found in the structure of the book, the development of Tobit's character, and the unfolding of the events related to his life."

[56] Those texts that refer to Tobit's frequent "acts of mercy" include: 1.3,7-8,16-20; 2.2-7,14; 4.5-11,16; 7.3; 12.8-10, 12-13; 14.10-11.

of distinction as a Jew away from land and Temple.[57] His faith is articulated in strictly nationalistic terms and demonstrated by both his concern for the plight of fellow Jews in exile and the zealous protection of familial and tribal ties.[58] Such strict separation is evident in the author's contention that Tobit does *not*: neglect Jerusalem (1.4,6), join his countrymen in idolatry (1.5), marry outside of tribal lines (1.9), or eat "the food of Gentiles" (1.10-11).

Several significant sub-plots develop within the narrative: the journey of his son Tobias; and, the plight of his future daughter-in-law Sarah. These sub-plots find their meaning against the backdrop of Tobit's exemplary piety in the face of apparently undeserved suffering. Tobit's suffering – experienced through both persecution (1.19-20) and a condition of blindness (2.9-10) – is linked directly to his pious practice of burying the corpses of his dead countrymen in the hostile environment of Nineveh (2.8). His subsequent prayer for deliverance from suffering (3.6, i.e. that he might die) sets in motion a sequence of events that culminate in the restoration of his life, which is mirrored by a narrative transformation in the text.[59]

Tobit's prayer is answered through the intervention of the archangel Raphael disguised as Tobit's kinsman Azariah – only the reader is aware of Azariah's true identity until his self-disclosure in 12.12-15. His instruction to Tobias brings Tobit restored physical vision instead of death (11.10-14), a daughter-in-law (11.16), and most importantly, prophetic vision (13.1-14.11).[60] The final words of Raphael himself (12.6-20) prepare the reader for the universal scope of Tobit's final vision with its hope-filled call to repentance. The result of Tobit's restored vision is the hymnic declaration that the

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[57] Amy-Jill Levine, "Diaspora as Metaphor: Bodies and Boundaries in the Book of Tobit," in *Diaspora Jews and Judaism: Essays in Honor of and in Dialogue with, A. Thomas Kraabel* (ed. J. Andrew Overman & Robert S. McLennan; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 105-117. She points out the importance of boundaries for people in exile, from a feminist perspective, specifically as they relate to the state of affairs for women under the domain of pious Jewish households.

[58] On the importance of familial / tribal ties in Tobit see Will Soll, "The Family as Scriptural and Social Construct in Tobit," in *The Function of Scripture in Early Jewish and Christian Tradition* (JSNTSup 154; ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1998), 166-175.

[59] Anathea Portier-Young, "Alleviation of Suffering in the Book of Tobit: Comedy, Community, and Happy Endings," *CBQ* 63 (2002): 35-54.

[60] In relatively subdued terms the author introduces the final eschatological hymn as speech (13.1 "Then Tobit said"), summarizes it as "words of praise" (14.1), and then places the final vision within a testamentary framework (14.2). Several commentators, however, have classified this passage as 'eschatological,' 'prophetic' and 'apocalyptic' (see below), especially Moore, *Tobit*, 293-294, and David McCracken, "Narration and Comedy in the Book of Tobit," *JBL* 114 (1995): 416.

New Jerusalem (13.9,16-17) will not only be characterized by God's merciful response to the repentance of faithful Israel (13.5-6), but in fact many nations will be drawn to the light of that great eschatological city and offer sincere worship – by bearing gifts (13.11b) and abandoning their idols (14.6-7a) – to the King of Heaven.

Virtually all commentators acknowledge this universal language in the final two chapters of Tobit but differ in their attempts to explain its presence. The role of Tobit himself in these chapters (note 1st person singular) suggests some understanding of the role in witness, which faithful Jews take up in the envisioned restoration. Recent studies of missionary activity in 2T Judaism have questioned the long-held view that it existed in any formal, active sense. Two scholars in particular suggest that nothing approaching the missionary character of the early Church is to be found in its precursor – Judaism.[61] In the absence of vigorous missionary activity, McKnight and Goodman argue that universalizing language in Jewish literature such as one finds in Tobit can best be attributed to: (1) Jewish 'nationalistic aspirations' fueled by current exilic conditions, and (2) a belief that the eschaton includes the conversion of Gentiles as a future reality, which God will bring about. Louis Feldman, in a recent restatement of the traditional position, however, argues that such language suggests the opposite. While he allows that 13.11 belongs to the category of 'apocalyptic act conversions,' he maintains that 13.13 and 14.6 are essentially examples of ongoing missionary activity.[62] The possibility has also been suggested that Tobit's universalistic statements, despite an embrace of Gentiles in the future, maintain a qualifying degree of Jewish distinctiveness.[63]

In the final analysis, one is left with a dramatic shift in Tobit's perspective that creates a significant theological tension within the book. The narrow, 'boundary-focused' worldview of the first eleven chapters gives way to an expression of eschatological optimism that is surprising. Scholars have attempted to explain this internal tension and apparent evolution of theological perspective in a number of ways. Nickelsburg describes

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[61] Scot McKnight, *A Light Among the Gentiles*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991, and Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.

[62] Louis Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 290, 327.

[63] Terence L. Donaldson, "Proselytes or 'Righteous Gentiles'? The Status of Gentiles in Eschatological Pilgrimage Patterns of Thought" *JSP* 7 (1990): 20.

this development as a movement "from despair to doxology."[64] The locus of change in this reading remains largely in the arena of Tobit's self-perception: from a suicidal sufferer to a vindicated worshipper of God. Unquestionably, the vocabulary and theology of joy – against the background of exilic suffering – is an essential part of the author's perspective.[65] Alternatively, instead of emphasizing Tobit's personal transformation, Irene Nowell suggests that he simply reflects the ambiguity of mixed attitudes toward Gentile nations among 2nd century B.C.E. Jews: personal, social separation *from them* on the one hand (throughout chapters 1-11), over against the religious commitment of faithful witness *to them* on the other hand (13.1-14.7).[66]

However, a deeper theological shift may also be at work in the text. David McCracken, in his analysis of the comedic character of Tobit,[67] observes the following narrative development: (1) Tobit the "comically fallible and in some ways unreliable" narrator with an excessive "tribalism" is transformed through suffering and divine intervention to (2) Tobit the visionary prophet "who still has familial attachment without the earlier excess". McCracken cites as proof of this narrative movement the fact that

> although Tobit's prayer is addressed to the 'children of Israel' and to Jerusalem (13.3,9,12), although he sees a vision of a new Jerusalem (13.16), and although he blesses 'the God of Israel' (13.17), his vision is universal...This universal vision of the New Jerusalem receiving Israel *and* the Gentiles becomes still more intense in the death speech (14.6).[68]

J. Cousland, who proposes a more serious presentation of the narrative's main character in a recent article, has questioned McCracken's suggestion of farcical and ridiculous comedic elements as important narrative (and theological) signals.[69] While he prefers to classify Tobit as "divine comedy," Cousland too, argues for "fundamental inversions" in the narrative, which should signal to the reader "that God will restore his people to their rightful situation."[70] In speaking of inversion and restoration Cousland clearly places the emphasis on the vindication of Israel. Any vision of the future which imagines that "the whole world will be converted and worship God in truth" (14.6) is qualified by Tobit's

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[64] Nickelsburg, "Stories," 44.
[65] Alexander A. Di Lella, "The Deuteronomic Background," 383.
[66] Irene Nowell, "Tobit: Attitude Toward the Nations," *The Bible Today* (September 1987): 283-288.
[67] McCracken, "Narration and Comedy," 401-418.
[68] McCracken, "Narration and Comedy," 416 (italics his).
[69] J.R.C. Cousland, "Tobit: A Comedy in Error?" *CBQ* 65 (2003): 535-553.
[70] Cousland, "Comedy," 551-552.

anticipation that such vindication ultimately includes the destruction of Nineveh (14.15). While McCracken's reading highlights the central narrative shifts in Tobit, which broaden toward inclusiveness, Cousland's response provides a necessary reminder of the ongoing concern of vindication that underlies the document throughout.

A final suggestion for understanding this tension, which builds on the previous observation, is to speak of it in terms of shifting 'ethical boundaries.'[71] Those elements of piety that distinguish the people of God in exile from all others – so crucial to the self-understanding and rhetorical motivation of Tobit in the earlier chapters – are conspicuously absent in the description of the New Jerusalem in the final two chapters.[72] Not only has the scope of the author widened to include all nations but the requirements for belonging to the people of God seem, at the very least, to be presented in broader terms. In the final two chapters, Jew and Gentile alike are called to demonstrate true repentance in order to receive the mercy of God, while the only prediction of what Gentiles will actually do to enter the New Jerusalem is to "abandon their idols" (14.6).[73]

This crucial issue of the dynamic movement in the book from a narrow, nationalistic world-view to an embracing, universal perspective raises two important questions: Why has the author of Tobit chosen this particular 'narrative trajectory' for his theological conviction? Further, how does he envision this new reality actually taking place? To the first question one may begin by pointing out the contrived nature of the narrative and its questionable factual reliability. One might also suggest that if the final two chapters truly represent the convictions of the author, the round about nature of the theological development described above seems unnecessary. Here, several scholars have made a valid observation that "the book of Tobit has another kind of historical value,"

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[71] Amy-Jill Levine, "Tobit: Teaching Jews how to live in the Diaspora" *BRev 8* (1992): 42-51,64. While noting well the emphasis on ethical boundaries in Tobit 1-11, Levine merely points out Tobit's re-emphasis on piety for his family at the end of his life without coming to terms with their absence in the visionary part of Tobit 13-14.

[72] Levine, "Diaspora," 108 and Donaldson, "Proselytes," 20, suggest that ethnic distinctions are, however, maintained in the 'universalistic' prophecies. While the language of the text may well justify such an observation, on the whole one must admit that in light of other traditionally exclusive perspectives found within Judaism, more is being 'conceded' in Tobit's vision than withheld.

[73] It should be pointed out that 14.8-11 represents a return to the motif of the exercise of piety on the part of the people of God in exile. This recurrence, however, is *after* the conclusion of Tobit's vision of the New Jerusalem and forms part of his exhortation to his family to reproduce his faithful example *in the present.*

i.e., a testimony to the way Jews "responded to the realities of life in the Diaspora."[74] McCracken has suggested that the motivation of the author is in fact to use Tobit's initially tribalistic perspective as a negative foil for true vision, which embraces all people.[75] In other words, the author goes to great lengths to describe such devotion to Jewish piety as a means of undermining its extremes later on in the narrative. He accomplishes this by portraying the archangel Raphael as somewhat impatient with Tobit's concerns for tribal pre-eminence (5.8), by articulating the "corrected" perspective first through Raphael (12.6) and then through Tobit himself (13.1ff), and finally by presenting the mercy of God as an ultimately universal commodity (14.5-7).[76] Whether or not the nuances of McCracken's analysis can be justified by the text, the reality of a "divine attitude adjustment" facilitated by the archangel Raphael is the literary means by which the author makes the narrative shift from a narrow to a universal world-view.[77]

The second question of how this move is accomplished is virtually untouched in scholarly literature. At the narrative level the obvious answer is that as the beneficiary of divine intervention – in the form of physical healing, the return of a son with his money, the gain of a pious daughter-in-law – Tobit responds with praise and rejoicing. His vindication leads to grand statements about the future of Israel, Jerusalem and the Gentile nations. The deeper level of theology, however, which addresses the author's own eschatological convictions, may be broached with a series of questions: What event or reality allows for the entrance of Gentiles into the New Jerusalem? Is there anything that prepares for this? What role, if any, do the faithful/righteous play in all of this?

The presence of divine names with universal connotations throughout the book has already been noted. Virtually all Jews regardless of whether they expected an eschatological annihilation or conversion of the Gentiles affirmed the concept of the

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[74] Moore, *Tobit*, 10 n.13, quoting Donald E. Gowan, *Bridge Between the Testaments: A Reappraisal of Judaism from the Exile to the Birth of Christianity* (2nd ed. Rev. PTMS 14. Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1980).

[75] Here McCracken overstates the case to make a point regarding the overall theological perspective of the book. One surely cannot dismiss the central theme of exhortation to Diaspora Jews entirely: "almsgiving (piety) delivers from death."

[76] McCracken, "Narration and Comedy," 414-415.

[77] Again note Cousland, "Tobit," 552, who takes issue with McCracken's analysis and classification of comedic elements in the narrative but whose own conclusions regarding the rhetorical effect of "fundamental inversions" in the narrative appear to be similar.

universality of God over all people.[78] To that extent, the philosophical groundwork necessary to embrace all people in an eschatological sense was already present – although it by no means guaranteed a universalistic understanding of salvation. There seem to be two options the reader may take in evaluating this issue: either Gentiles are ultimately converted because of the piety and faithful witness of Jews,[79] or both Jew and Gentile are finally dependent upon the mercy of God for salvation.

In order to determine what role the personal piety of Jews was understood by the author of Tobit to fulfill, two preliminary observations can be made: (1) those statements exhorting the giving of alms consistently refer to their positive effective upon the one *doing* them (prosperity, insurance against the time of need, deliverance from Darkness – 4.6-11; saves from death, purges sin, promises full life – 12.9; 14.11); and, (2) these "acts of mercy" are said to facilitate that which *is* expected to have an impact on Gentiles – the giving of glory and praise to God in light of His faithfulness to the one who has done these good deeds (12.6; 13.6). The theological message that seems to corroborate this understanding of the role of "acts of mercy" is Tobit's call for repentance both to his own people ("children of Israel" 13.5-6) and to all others ("you sinners" 13.6).[80] In both instances what becomes the effective 'saving agent' is God's mercy. It is noteworthy that Tobit does not regard his own faithful witness to sinners as a *guarantee* of their positive response and conversion. That matter finally remains dependent upon God himself (13.6).

On precisely this point chapters 13 and 14 present a unified message, which may be illustrated by the following pattern:

A Israel will repent and "do what is right" (13.5-6; 14.7)

B God will turn again to Israel in mercy and they will "bless the King [in Jerusalem]...to all generations forever" (13.6d; 14.5,7)

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[78] McKnight, *Light*, 13, states "...the foundation of a favorable attitude toward Gentiles is a recognition that God is creator of all and that humanity is, at some level, a unity." See also Feldman, *Jew*, 289, and Nowell, "Tobit," 286-287.

[79] Nowell, "Attitude," 287, takes this position and argues that "Because of the universality of God, the faithful Jew has a responsibility to witness the true nature of God to the Gentiles. The result of faithful witness will be the conversion of the Gentiles to the God of Israel."

[80] McKnight, *Light*, 34 is not convinced that 13.6d or 13.8 refer to non-Jews. This does, however, seem to be the point especially of 13.6 – Tobit is declaring the glory of God *to the nation of his exile* [ἐγὼ ἐν τῇ γῇ

A[1] Gentile nations will *then* be drawn to Jerusalem the "bright light," convert, and "worship God in truth" (13.11a; 14.6)

B[1] Generation after generation of the "inhabitants of the remotest parts of the earth" will praise God in Jerusalem (13.11b; 14.7a)

In his comparison of Tobit 14.3-11 with Deuteronomy, Di Lella points out that the offer of mercy and the promise of return to Jerusalem is dependent upon a similar offer, which Moses made in Deuteronomy 30.2-3 (LXX). He goes on to suggest that the order of the text in 14.4-6 demonstrates that the conversion of the Gentiles was the reason why God would again have mercy on Israel.[81] What seems certain is that God's mercy is what Tobit champions in his hymn of praise: God's mercy gives Israel renewed opportunity for repentance, and the demonstration of that mercy to his own people becomes the singular reality which leads to the conversion of the Gentiles. One might reflect this theological development back upon the text of Tobit and suggest that, within the narrative plot, once Tobit understood God's mercy toward himself and his family, he was able to make the shift outside of nationalistic boundaries to embrace the Gentile nations into the New Jerusalem.

3.2.4 Evaluating the Developing Biblical Traditions in Tobit

The thematic associations between Tobit 13-14 and Isaianic material provide an important link to eschatological statements in later Jewish and Christian literature. The author's point of reference for envisioning the ultimate expression of God's sovereign rule is the New Jerusalem. Symbolically this image functions as a descriptive, tangible focal point of Israel's hopes for restoration and vindication (particularly poignant from an exilic perspective). As a prominent biblical motif it serves to illustrate God's control over human history, to describe the restoration of land and Temple, and to inspire the exiled people of God with the promise of their future return to Jerusalem. This description finds expression in Tobit in the form of three images: (1) the gathering of repentant Israelites back to their own land and Temple (13.5,13; 14.5,7) echoes the language of Deuteronomy 30.4 (importantly, see also Isa 11.12; 40.11; Jer 29.14; Ezek 36.24); (2) the

[81] Di Lella, "The Deuteronomic Background," 382.

acknowledgment and worship of Gentile nations and their subsequent pilgrimage to Jerusalem (13.11; 14.6-7) recalls Isaiah 60.3-10;[82] and, (3) the physical rebuilding of Jerusalem with extravagant building materials (13.16-17) is dependent upon Isaiah 54.11-12. Clearly the use of these traditions by the author of Tobit, which anticipate Israel's repentance, re-gathering and ultimate vindication before the nations, has its most immediate roots in Isaiah.

The appearance of inclusive, universal language in the eschatological vision of Tobit, while dependent upon Isaianic traditions, is set within the framework of earlier Deuteronomic traditions. Moore illustrates this by offering three comparative examples: Deut 32.39 and Tobit 13.2; Deut 30.1-10 and Tobit 13.5; and, Deut 32.20 and Tobit 13.6.[83] The function of Deuteronomy 30-32 as precursor to both Isaianic material and Tobit is difficult to assess since, to the contemporary reader, it contains little optimism and no explicitly universal language. Weitzman offers the possibility, however, that the tradition regarding the message and use of the Song of Moses had undergone significant adjustment in popular perception by the time of Tobit.

> There is scattered but substantial evidence – chiefly from Philo of Alexandria and rabbinic literature – that Deuteronomy 32 was perceived by readers in the Second Temple period not as an act of chastisement *from God to Israel*, but as an act of praise and thanksgiving *from Moses to God*. Thus, Philo describes Deuteronomy 32 as a 'final thanksgiving hymn'...(*On the Virtues* 72-75), while *Targum Onqelos* consistently translates the word 'song' in Deuteronomy 31-32 as 'praise'...[84]

Weitzman concludes that it is not at all difficult to "...argue that Tobit 12-13 alludes to the Song of Moses not as it was intended to be read but as it was actually read in the Second Temple period – that is, as a song of praise."[85] Such apparent fluidity in the understanding and use of biblical traditions should help to prepare the reader for the kind of theological development that one finds in Tobit. The issue of universal language is, however, not the only important consideration with regard to Deuteronomy 30-32 (see below).

It is worth noting that two features of apocalyptic conceptions of the future age figure prominently in Tobit's vision of the future: the dialectic between mercy and

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[82] Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 313.
[83] Moore, *Tobit*, 284-285. See also Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 307-311.
[84] Weitzman, "Allusion," 55 (italics his).
[85] Weitzman, "Allusion," 55.

judgment – often in terms of "blessing" and "cursing;" and, the description of the New Jerusalem as the ultimate expression of God's sovereign rule. The universal inclusion of all people in the visions of Tobit is qualified with language that mitigates an indiscriminate acceptance of all people into the New Jerusalem. A sense of the kind of parameters that govern the movement of both Jews and Gentiles into the New Jerusalem can be discerned in at least three ways: (1) responsibility for personal repentance which rests with individual "sinners" (13.6); (2) a distinction between sincere and insincere worshipers of God (14.7); (3) the presence of "blessing" and "cursing" language. These ways of defining genuine salvation illustrate on a specific level the dependence of the author upon the structure and theology of Deuteronomy 30-32.[86] At this point one need not rely on what the development of tradition in the 2TP may have been regarding Moses' final words to Israel. Here there seems to be straightforward agreement between the texts regarding the correlation between God's mercy to all and the necessity of individual response.

3.2.5 Summary

Central to our reading of Tobit is recognition that a significant narrative shift is achieved by the protagonist's movement from a narrowly conceived nationalism to a much more inclusively articulated vision of Israel's restoration in the eschatological future. The purpose of tracing this narrative trajectory has been to determine whether this shift – recognized in different ways by several scholars recently – signals hope for a large-scale conversion of the nations. For several reasons it seems necessary to conclude that this is not the case.

First, while the overall perspective of Tobit widens remarkably by the final two chapters, there nevertheless remain important signals embedded throughout the text that qualify its inclusive language.[87] Perhaps the most prominent of these is the influence of Deuteronomy 30-32 as an interpretive undercurrent throughout chapters 12-13. This biblical tradition provides the author of Tobit with a template for incorporating the concept of personal responsibility for repentance alongside hopes for the national

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[86] See Di Lella, "The Deuteronomic Background," 381-389; and Weitzman, "Allusion," 49-61.
[87] We have noted that Levine, Donaldson and Cousland all make this point in their own respective ways.

restoration and vindication of God's people. His choice of language is the dialectic between judgment and mercy – mirroring the function of "blessing and cursing" language in the Deuteronomic material.

Second, how the author intends his inclusion of New Jerusalem visionary material to function provides clues as to the parameters of his inclusive language. His description of the New Jerusalem as an open, secure, honored and resplendent city is based largely on Isaianic traditions. Beyond his indebtedness to the language of Isaiah, the author of Tobit also appears to adopt a similar understanding of the function of these traditions as predominantly interested in the vindication of God and his faithful people. Thus by envisioning the attraction to and inclusion of non-Jewish peoples in scenes of the New Jerusalem, these traditions provide a rhetorical platform on which to champion its eventual superiority and supremacy.

A third element of the final chapters of Tobit, which mitigates a thoroughly universalistic reading, is the role in which faithful Jews are cast with respect to the task of witness to the nations. Nowhere is the conviction expressed that faithful witness to God guarantees the conversion of the nations. Rather, faithful witness is commended primarily on the grounds of God's character (13.3-4,6,10), the obedient outworking of one's own piety and the prerequisite for deliverance from exile (13.5-6). Any consideration of the outcome of such witness is resigned to the sphere of God's mercy (13.6). To be sure, we have noted that the narrative trajectory of the entire document turns on the transformation brought about by God's mercy.

While one may speak of the optimistic tone of the final chapters of Tobit, the text does not support an unqualified view of Gentile participation in the restoration of Israel. The hopes, which Tobit articulates for the future, have primarily faithful members of Israel in view. Those points at which Gentile participation is envisioned can be identified as part of a common interpretive stream in the 2TP that raised this possibility only indirectly. While the potential for some Gentile participation is certainly not denied, its primary rhetorical function seems to be as a way of affirming the ultimate sovereign rule of Israel's God.

3.3 The *Similitudes of Enoch* (*1 Enoch* 37-71)[88]

3.3.1 Introduction

The Enochic *Similitudes* (*1 Enoch* 37-71) is an apocalyptic vision of the events concerned with the eschatological Day of Judgment. This cosmic description of the future is set in an ancient literary and thematic framework common to the other early Enochic literature – namely, the days of Enoch (and Noah: cf. *1 Enoch* 10.1-2; 65.1-69.26; 106-107; 108). Although reconstructions of the historical circumstances that may have occasioned this material are anything but certain, the socio-political symbolism and rhetoric of the text suggest a present crisis of some sort for the author and his community.[89] A survey of the recent research and debate on the *Similitudes* reveals an almost singular interest by NT scholars in the appearance of a 'Son of Man' figure[90] – particularly as cast in the messianic role of eschatological judge. In spite of the implications of this figure for NT Christology, the absence of the *Similitudes* at Qumran (the only section of the Enochic corpus not found there) has fuelled great debate regarding date and provenance.[91] His groundbreaking work on the Ethiopic text of 1

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[88] The translation upon which this analysis is dependant is that of Michael A. Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch: A New Edition in the Light of the Aramaic Dead Sea Fragments* vol. 1 & 2 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978). For comparative reasons attention is also given to E. Isaac, "I Enoch," in *OTP*; and Matthew Black, *1 Enoch* (SVTP 7, Leiden: Brill, 1985).

[89] David W. Suter, *Tradition and Composition in the Parables of Enoch* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979), 29-32. See 47.2,4; 53.7; 62.11 for the most explicit references in the text to the (present?) physical suffering of the righteous.

[90] See Matthew Black, "A Bibliography on 1 Enoch in the Eighties," in *JSP 5* (1989): 3-16; M. Black, "The Messianism of the Parables of Enoch," in J.H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); James H. Charlesworth, *Prolegomena*; J.J. Collins, *Imagination*; James VanderKam, "Messianism and Apocalypticism," in J.J. Collins, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, (vol 1; New York: Continuum, 2000); James VanderKam, "Righteous One, Messiah, Chosen One, and Son of Man in *1 Enoch* 37-71," in *Revelation and Canon: Studies in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Literature*, (JSJS 62; Leiden: Brill, 2000).

[91] See J.T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 89-98. Milik proposed that an author with ties to certain Christian "Sibylline Oracles circles" produced the *Similitudes* in the late third century C.E. He believed that the text reflected both the persecution of Christians by the Emperors Decius and Valerian in 249-259 C.E. (47.1-4; 62.11), and the invasion of the West by Sassanid Sapor I in 260 C.E. (56.5-7). Further, as a later Christian composition that eventually replaced the *Book of Giants* as the second part of an 'Enochic pentateuch', the *Similitudes* drew theologically upon the Son of Man sayings in the NT Gospels. Virtually every point of Milik's proposal has come under criticism. In summary they are: (1) It is not reasonable to assume that absence from the library at Qumran is conclusive proof that a document did not exist at that time; (2) Continued analysis and editing of Ethiopic *1 Enoch* has produced virtual unanimity among scholars since Milik's proposal that the text is characteristic of Jewish/Semitic writing; (3) The 'Son of Man' passages present no substantial dependence on or development of the Son of Man material in the NT gospels. Their inspiration is better understood as coming from Dan 7.9-14. In fact, the reverse – that the NT Gospels use and adapt the Enochic Son of Man figure – is more plausible; (4) If the reference to Parthians in 56.5-7 may be placed historically – and that in

Enoch notwithstanding, J.T. Milik's argument both for a late date (mid 3rd cent. C.E.) and for Christian authorship has been widely rejected. It appears now that dating the *Similitudes* to the late part of the 1st century C.E. is relatively secure.[92]

Regardless of how one ultimately interprets the issues of authorship and date, this document nevertheless represents a complex of eschatological ideas that may helpfully inform a study of those instances in the NT where expectations for a future messianic kingdom share some common features. The significance of the *Similitudes* in the development of biblical traditions with regard to the eschatological fate of the nations is here evaluated from three related angles: (1) an analysis of the overall literary framework of the three parables in order to discover the particular theological concerns against which the individual universal passages may be understood; (2) the thorough use of epithets and labeling for antithetical/antagonistic groups which play an important role in determining the perspective that underlies the universal and particularistic motifs; and, (3) the resulting function of the specific instances of universal language within the text. This order of inquiry will attempt to provide a literary and theological context within which the *Similitudes*' incorporation of traditions with a universal perspective may be understood. The evidence will suggest that the author's specific purposes necessarily narrow and define that language.

3.3.2 Literary Structure

Several literary markers initially allow for a relatively simple division of the visionary material: chapter 37 as the introduction, 38-44 the first parable, 45-57 the second parable, 58-69 the third parable, and 70 and 71 as two separate epilogues to the vision as a whole. Three introductory statements (38.1; 45.1; 58.1) provide a summary or

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itself is tenuous – it seems to reflect a situation where Jerusalem is still a defensible city. Further, if one could demonstrate that the document was composed post-70 C.E., it lacks any indication that Jerusalem had fallen to the Romans such as one finds in 4 Ezra and *2 Baruch*. See also Collins, *Imagination*, 177-178; Suter, *Tradition*, 12-13; Charlesworth, *Prolegomena*, 88-90,108-110; Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction* (London: SCM Press, 1981), 221-223; Black, *1 Enoch*, 182-188; E. Isaac, "1 Enoch," 7.

[92] Among those who continue to understand the document as too overtly Christian to have been composed before the 2nd cent. C.E. is E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 347-348. See also David W. Kuck, *Judgment and Community Conflict: Paul's Use of Apocalyptic Judgment Language in 1 Corinthians 3.5-4.5* (NovTSup, vol. LXVI; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 57, who simply avoids any discussion of the *Similitudes* on this basis.

overview of what follows in each respective parable. When these introductory statements are set alongside one another they allow the reader to appreciate the primary theological emphasis of the document. This message, which can easily be lost in the wide range of cosmic, mythic and mystic symbolism, is that the blessed destiny of "the righteous and the chosen" as well as the judgment and destruction of their antagonists are certain.[93]

More importantly, these markers signal the use of recapitulation – the literary technique by which the author reinforces his primary theological concerns through expanded repetition and advance.[94] This common feature of apocalyptic literature is used in the *Similitudes* in such a way that each successive parable reemphasizes the author's primary message and provides the framework within which differing strands of tradition are to be understood. The significance of this framework consists in the ability of apocalyptic literature to hold divergent material in tension. Gray observes this characteristic as particularly evident here: "[the *Similitudes*] do not present a consistent eschatology, but rather glimpses and facets of celestial order...in evidently independent passages which focus on separate features."[95] What follows will be an attempt to outline the movement of the author's main concerns through the three parables with a view to evaluating the possible role of universal traditions in that context. Further, it will be necessary to discern whether or not there is evidence of theological development within the *Similitudes* that moves from a narrow particularistic perspective toward wider inclusion.

The first parable (38-44) is the shortest and seems intended as a panoramic overview of the concerns of the *Similitudes*. It incorporates a brief statement of the focus of the vision (38.1-2), a summary of the anticipated result (38.3-6), and a celestial journey (heavenly tour) in which "secrets" are revealed to Enoch (39-44). These secrets include: the resting places of the holy / righteous (39); a glimpse of the "glory of the Lord of Spirits" accompanied by angelic hosts (40); a cosmic behind (above?) the scenes description of the forces of nature as witness to the righteous judgments of the Lord of Spirits (41); a brief statement regarding the competing work of Wisdom and Iniquity

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[93] Collins, *Imagination*, 181; Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 214; and Black, *1 Enoch*, 185.
[94] Suter, *Tradition*, 116.
[95] John Gray, *The Biblical Doctrine of the Reign of God* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 247.

(42)[96]; and finally, a description of the righteous as "cosmic lightning" (43-44). A case might actually be made that with the revelation of the righteous' dwelling places (39.7-8) and their ultimate inheritance of the earth (38.4; 43.4) the first parable reaches further forward temporally than do the second and third.

The focus of the second parable (45-57) is the judgment and destiny of "sinners who deny the name of the Lord of Spirits" (45.1-2). The introduction of "that Son of Man" (46.1-6), leads to several important developments in the author's depiction of the eschaton. Against the splendor of the Son of Man, "the kings and powerful of the earth" are humbled, judged and punished (46.4-8; 48.8-10; 53.5; 54.1-2; 56.5,8). Interspersed are moments of unexpected optimism for some outside "the righteous" (48.4-5; 50.1-5), mystical insights into the heavenly perspective on the struggle of the righteous (47; 49), and ancient mythic analogies as to how the judgment of sinners will be meted out (52; 54-55).

Finally, the third parable (58-69) is summarized as being "about the righteous and the chosen" (58-59) and followed by an "insider" tour of the cosmic order and heavenly secrets (60-61 as an expansion of 40-44). The vindication of the righteous is in fact accomplished through the despairing confession of the "kings and mighty ones of the earth" (62-63). This self-indictment by the opponents of the righteous functions as the climactic moment of the vision. In support of such a reading one may note that the vindication of the righteous is not only described directly (62.11-15) but also acknowledged indirectly by their opponents (63.8; see below). The material that follows (64.1-69.29) has been the subject of some speculation as an interpolation from a (lost) 'Book of Noah' (cf. *Jub.* 10.13-14; 21.10; *1 En.* 106-107; 1Q19).[97] Whether this material is an interpolation or an intentional reworking of the Watcher myth as a cosmic analogy to the destiny of the kings and powerful of the earth matters little. The function of this

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[96] Michael Mach, "From Apocalypticism to Early Jewish Mysticism?" in *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, 245-249. He provides a comparison of a similar account of Wisdom's search for a dwelling place on earth in Sirach 24 but with the opposite result - Sirach's Wisdom finds a place on earth (as Torah). Mach concludes that the difference "reflects the general attitudes of the respective authors to life in this world" (246). See also Collins, "The Heavenly Representative: The 'Son of Man' in the Similitudes of Enoch," in John J. Collins and George Nickelsburg, eds., *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms* (SBLSCS 12; Chico: Scholars Press, 1980), 118; and Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 216.

[97] Suter, *Tradition*, 32-33; and Collins, "Heavenly Representative," 127 n.8; and Michael E. Stone, "Apocalyptic Literature," in *JWSTP* (CRINT 2.2; Assen: Van Gorcum, 1984), 402 n.104.

material is not to expand the main message of their destiny beyond the descriptions of 62-63 but it does reassert its cosmic significance and certainty.

3.3.3 Group Identification and the Use of Epithets

The perspective from which and for whom the author of the *Similitudes* writes is that of "the righteous." This term is the one most frequently used by the author to refer to those who will ultimately be vindicated at the judgment because they serve and trust in the Lord of Spirits. They are further referred to as "the chosen ones" and "the holy" and are also identified by their suffering and what they do not participate in related to the worldly system (48.7). These terms, however, serve the author's purpose with respect to more than one category of beings. Beyond the servants of God who dwell on earth, these terms – used in substantive singular form – can refer to the messianic figure.[98] Further there are times when the reader must discern whether the author is referring to humans (i.e. the righteous who dwell on the dry ground) or angelic hosts (i.e. the righteous who dwell in the heavens).[99] These literary shifts illustrate the various cosmic (spatial) levels addressed in the vision and, in the majority of cases, the context makes clear which group is intended.[100] Read contextually, the texts in question seem to suggest that these terms represent a community on earth that is united in their faith, suffering and future (ultimate) vindication.

As briefly noted earlier, the author of this apocalypse refers to the opponents of the righteous with a number of different labels or epithets. A brief overview of these categories will allow a more precise discussion. There does not seem to be any discernible pattern or method to determine how and why these varying identifications are made except to note that what his vision purports to describe takes place on more than one spatial (cosmic) level. The visionary journey seems to move easily between these

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[98] Collins, "Heavenly Representative," 112-114, recognizes the close relationship between the community of the righteous and the Son of Man figure. He accepts the "communal dimension" of the figure but rejects the notion of corporate personality, which loses any sense of distinction between the two. See also VanderKam, "Righteous One," 413-420, 432-438.

[99] Note 38.4 and 47.1-4. Both Knibb and Isaac have tried to differentiate between the two by adding a modifier (i.e. "holy ones" or "holy children") when referring to angelic beings as opposed to simply "holy" for humans.

[100] This overlap of terms is illustrated by the shift between 39.1 where "the chosen and holy children" refer to angelic beings (Watchers), and 39.4-7 where "the righteous and holy...the chosen ones" refer to humans "whose dwelling was with the angels" (future eschatological perspective).

levels, forcing the reader to carefully follow the changing scenes and characters, all the while maintaining a remarkably consistent focus on its message.

The list of identifications for the opponents of the righteous in the *Similitudes* includes: the Watchers (fallen angels), the kings and powerful/mighty of the earth, sinners, those who dwell upon the ground, and humans.

3.3.3.1 <u>"The Watchers"</u>:

The ancient myth of the fallen angels who mixed culturally and sexually with humans, a development of the biblical tradition found in Genesis 6.1-4, is also found prominently at other points in the Enochic literature (*Book of Watchers* [*1En.* 1-36]; *Book of Giants*). In these earlier Enochic writings, the antagonistic role of the Watchers is conceived of in broadly cosmic terms – as the instigators of evil who are ultimately responsible for the judgment of the earth by the Deluge. This judgment then becomes paradigmatic for the eschatological Day of Judgment. Its form in the *Similitudes*, however, has generally been thought to represent a separate traditional source.[101] Even though the theological perspective of the *Similitudes* increases the emphasis on human responsibility for sin, its view of the Watchers affirms their thorough culpability for evil on earth. They are not only enemies of "the righteous" but in fact oppose and pollute all of humankind, whom they are said to have "led astray" (54.3-6; 67.7). By drawing upon this tradition of angelic beings that stand to receive sure judgment, the author achieves two important goals: (1) he can present a cosmic foil with which to compare and identify the judgment of the oppressors of the righteous, and (2) he satisfies his strong sense of the mercy of God[102] by insisting that the judgment by Deluge should serve to bring about "change" in the kings and powerful of the earth before it is too late (67.8-13). The aims of such a theological perspective must account in large part for the way in which he moves between cosmic levels and literary traditions.

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[101] Suter, *Tradition*, 14-16,32. He follows the suggestion of J.C. Greenfield (*Prolegomena to 3 Enoch or the Hebrew Book of Enoch*) that the *Similitudes* reflect the influence of Merkabah mysticism, which does not seem to have found wide acceptance at Qumran. David Flusser has also noted important cosmological and theological differences between the *Similitudes* and texts found at Qumran (Suter, *Tradition*, 15; Collins, *Imagination*, 177, n.3).

[102] This theme is common and emphatic: 50.2-5; 60.5,25; 61.5,13.

3.3.3.2 "Those Who Dwell Upon the Earth" / "Men":

Although this term could technically be understood in a wider sense than 'sinners', its use is more ambiguous from the standpoint of what the author actually envisions their fate to be. At times they are referred to in the same condemning manner as the "kings and powerful" or "sinners" (46.7; 52.7; 53.1; 62.1); at other times their status seems neutral or naïve (60.5), and possibly even positive (38.4; 48.4-5).[103]

3.3.3.3 "Sinners":

This is ultimately the term with which the author associates his perceived antagonists in the widest possible sense. Although his critique of the opponents of "the righteous" will become more specific (see below), these are those who "have denied the Lord of Spirits" (38.4; 40.2; 45.1-2) and who have caused "the righteous" grief (47.2,4; 53.2,7; 62.11).

3.3.3.4 "The Kings and Powerful of the Earth":

The most common designation of those sinners singled out for judgment and destruction in the *Similitudes* are those who represent worldly power, wealth and social status. On several occasions they are charged with the same fault – "denying the Lord of Spirits" – as previously noted for sinners in general (46.5-7; 48.10; 63.7; 67.8,10).[104] The evidence suggests that without exception this label is a pejorative one. Surprisingly, these rulers and power brokers are attributed with several commendable characteristics at the Day of Judgment: (1) bringing tribute due the Lord of Spirits (53.1-2); (2) offering genuine praise and homage to the Lord of Spirits (62.6,9; 63.1-2); and, (3) presenting an accurate self-appraisal and indictment in a final moment of hopeful confession (62.9; 63.2-5). These actions are met with rejection on the grounds that they occur too late (53.1-5; 62.10; 63.6-10), and illustrate the author's literary ability of placing the vindication of the righteous in the mouths of their opponents and oppressors.

The likelihood that all the terms mentioned above (except the first) refer to the *same* group of people is not only to be inferred from the application of similar symbolism to each of the groups within the text. Identification of "kings and powerful" with

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[103] This phrase has been rendered in two ways that represent quite different possibilities. While Knibb maintains a more literal "those who dwell/possess the earth," Isaac opts for the more theologically significant "landowners."

[104] Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature*, 215.

"sinners" may also be argued for contextually in especially three instances (53.1-7; 56.5-8; 62.1-11) where both terms seem to be used interchangeably. What seems to be consistently reflected in the parables is that "...sinners are economic exploiters, the political oppressors, and the socially unjust people of this world."[105] Noticeably absent from this list is the term "Gentile"[106] which appears only once in the vision (48.4-5) in a seemingly positive light (see below). What must be granted, however, is that the author surely has "kings and powerful" in mind who are Gentile rulers (but perhaps are not limited to such). There is one further group envisioned in the *Similitudes* with particular significance for the present study:

3.3.3.5 <u>"Others"</u>:

1 Enoch 50 introduces a concept that is otherwise foreign to the *Similitudes* – a third group of people who belong neither to the righteous nor the sinners as they are initially conceived. The problems and possibilities created by their appearance constitute an important point of departure for the present study (see below).

3.3.4 Universal Traditions in the Similitudes

The importance of the 'Son of Man' figure notwithstanding, one may well argue that the primary interest of the author lies with the bigger picture of salvation (vindication) and judgment (punishment). Scholarly surveys and introductions to the *Similitudes* are virtually unanimous in their appraisal of the exclusively dualistic eschatological perspective – two groups with opposite destinies (38.1-2; 41.2; 45.6; 60.6).[107] Belief in the certainty of these twin eschatological elements serves as the *Leitmotiv* not only of the *Similitudes*, but is in fact predominant in each of the remaining major sections of *1 Enoch* in spite of the likelihood of multiple authors/editors and varied dating.[108] In the *Similitudes*, the author advances this agenda by employing a rhetorical strategy on two fronts: (1) the inclusion both of detailed descriptions of the final places of

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[105] E. Isaac, "I Enoch," 9.
[106] Collins, *Imagination*, 182, cites this as evidence that the *Similitudes*' division of people is entirely based upon ethical considerations versus ethnic boundaries.
[107] Collins, *Imagination*, 181 states, "The final destiny of both parties is emphatically clear"; Isaac, "1 Enoch," 9-10, observes, "Old Testament ideas and stories are presented through the paradigm of apocalyptic dualism, wherein sharp distinctions are drawn between the opposing cosmic powers of good and evil and between the present and coming ages."
[108] See Isaac, "1 Enoch," 9.

destiny and the corresponding responses to final judgment of all parties concerned; and (2) the use of various labels or epithets with which he identifies and categorizes the participants in the final eschatological drama (as noted above) including "the righteous" (the faithful community).[109] The theological impression signaled by these features suggests that the author operates within narrow, well-defined parameters with respect to the issues of salvation (vindication) and judgment. The reader is left with the sense that while the present circumstances of the community for which the author is writing may be tumultuous and uncertain, there is no ambiguity or lack of clarity in how things will ultimately turn out for them.[110]

Before such a view can be maintained, however, three significant features of the text must be taken into account: (1) the vision of "that Son of Man" as a light to the Gentiles (48.4-5); (2) the presence of a third group of "others" who appear to obtain mercy but "without honor" (50.1-5); and, (3) the frequent scenes of inclusive, all-encompassing worship before the Lord of Spirits (see below). These moments in which a more inclusive rhetoric is employed by the author must be evaluated along two contextual lines. To begin, the internal literary structure of the three parables must be taken into consideration. Following this, those biblical traditions, which the author makes use of and possibly adapts to suit his own interests, must be evaluated.[111]

3.3.4.1 *1 Enoch* 48.4-5

The first instance of universal language in the *Similitudes* occurs in the context of a description of the "Son of Man" as "pre-existent" in 48.1-10.[112] His role as eschatological judge, while emphasized in its punitive character against the kings and powerful of the earth, is also portrayed positively with respect to those oppressed by

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[109] The author uses a number of terms to delineate this final group: holy [ones] (*qeddusan*), righteous [ones] (*sadeqan*), and chosen/elect [ones] (*xeruyan*). The task of determining when these terms refer to angels or humans often requires careful contextual analysis.

[110] On this point I disagree with Kuck, *Judgment*, 58, who identifies these same emphases on the part of the author but suggests that the lines of distinction are unclear. Clarity is difficult at the level of terminology (i.e. classification) but not in terms of final destiny.

[111] This is what Vanderkam refers to as the distinction between "borrowing" and "transforming."

[112] In favor of a "pre-existent Son of Man" see Collins, "Heavenly Representative," 120. This leads him to regard the identification of Enoch as the Son of Man (70.1; 71.14) as a later addition. Against this view see VanderKam, "Righteous One," 425-428. He argues that the language of 48.3,6 cannot be made to say more than that the Chosen One (messianic figure) is *named* and *known* before creation, thus foreknowledge does not necessarily mean pre-existence. He further concludes that the final chapter was original and serves as a climactic presentation of Enoch as "Son of Man."

them. Although the perspective of the author elsewhere would lead the reader to expect those who suffer to be limited to "the righteous / chosen / holy," this is in fact unclear in view of the combined use of the terms "the nations...those who grieve...All those who dwell upon the dry ground." If one may suggest that the author does not waver from his view of certain judgment for "the kings and powerful of the earth" – as 48.8-10 certainly suggests – then the inclusive language of 48.4-5 must be considered further. The importance of the concept of justice – not just for the "oppressed" but for the "righteous oppressed" – is the central theme of the visionary material immediately preceding the passage in question (47.1-4).

There has been considerable discussion regarding the traditions that inform this section of the *Similitudes*. The influence of the Son of Man tradition from Daniel 7.9-14 on *1 Enoch* 48.1-3 has been well documented and a case has been made for the influence of the Exodus tradition (Exod 14-15) in the judgment of the kings and powerful in 48.8-10.[113] Between these texts, however, 48.4-6 seems to be an adaptation of several crucial concepts in Isaiah 51.3-23. A comparison with both the MT and LXX at this point sheds further light on the use of language and developing traditions, which help to shape the theological perspective of the author of the Similitudes (see next page).

[113] Suter, *Tradition*, 112-113.

1 Enoch 48.4-6,8,10	Isaiah 51 (MT)	Isaiah 51 (LXX)
"He will be a staff to the righteous and the holy, that they may lean on him and not fall, and **he** (will be) **the light of the nations**, and **he will be the hope of those who grieve** in their hearts. All who dwell upon the dry ground will fall down and worship before him, and **they will bless, and praise, and celebrate** with psalms the name of the Lord of Spirits...And in those days **the kings of the earth and the strong** who possess the dry ground will have downcast faces because of the work of their hands...**they will fall down** before him...and there will be no one to take them with his hands and raise them... "	"[4]Listen to me my people; give me your ears O **nations**, for **the law** will go out from me and **I will restore my justice as a light of the nations.** [5]My righteousness draws near speedily, my salvation is on the way, and **my arm will judge the nations.** The islands will confide (hope) in me and **wait in hope for my arm...** [7]Listen to me, you who demonstrate righteousness – people who reverence the law in their hearts – (even) **as an object of humankind's reproach, do not be broken by their reviling...**[22]So says the Lord your God, even your God who defends you, "I will take from your hand the cup that made you stagger, along with the goblet – the cup of my wrath – never again will you drink (or it). [23]And I will put it into the hands of **your tormentors**, who said to you, '**Bend down** your bodies that we may walk over you, and put your backs like the ground and like a street in order to cross over (them)."	[4]"Listen to me, listen my people, and (you) ***kings*** pay attention to me; for ***my*** **law** will go forth from me and **my justice as a light of the nations.** [5]My righteousness is quickly approaching and my salvation will go forth as a light, and **in my arm the nations *will hope***. The islands will hold out (for) me and **in my arm they will hope...**[7]Listen to me, those who observe justice – my people who have my law in your heart – **Do not be afraid of the abuse of men and do not be defeated by their contempt...**[22]This is what the Lord who judges his people says, 'Look, I have taken the cup of stumbling from your hand, the cup of wrath, and you will not be made to drink it; [23]and I will put it into the hands of **those who treated you unjustly and humiliated you** – who said 'You **lay down** in order that we may pass over you and put your backs like the ground that those outside may pass by."

This textual comparison allows for several observations: There is the unexpected movement in Isaiah 51.4 from עמים (MT) to βασιλεῖς (LXX) and it seems that this latter reading fits with the *Similitudes*' polemic against oppressing kings and rulers. What becomes evident is that while the *Similitudes* certainly present an agenda vis-à-vis the oppressors of "the righteous," the LXX in fact provides the necessary textual shift to facilitate the expression of that agenda. Greater clarity emerges with respect to the use of universal terminology. Both MT and LXX readings suggest that the phrase "light of/to the nations" has a specific function, to describe the range of effect of the law in executing God's justice. The literary context of the *Similitudes*' second parable – particularly the portrayal of the Son of Man as the eschatological judge over all the earth (46.1-6), and the concern with justice for the suffering righteous (47.1-4) – suggest that in *1 Enoch* 48 the primary concern is also with justice. Therefore the assumption that "light of/to the nations" is an unmitigated positive description cannot be sustained without further evidence. What Isaiah 51 ascribes to the law as God's mediator of justice on behalf of the nation of Israel becomes the function of the Son of Man on behalf of "the righteous" in the *Similitudes*. The broader tenor of Isaiah's terms "nations" and "islands" are qualified and narrowed in the *Similitudes*. Since judgment of the oppressor and vindication for the oppressed are never stated in terms of "the nations" over against Israel in the *Similitudes*, but rather in terms of "the kings and powerful" or "sinners" over against "the righteous," the label "nations" may in fact be understood in a narrower sense than in deutero-Isaiah. This does not necessarily imply that the author of the *Similitudes* had no such hope for the nations, but it does suggest that in this case he equates Isaiah's "nations" with those he believes to be oppressed. Moreover, the term "nations" is also a consistent way in which those who are oppressed are referred to in the taunts against tyrants characteristic of first Isaiah (10.5-34: the king of Assyria; 14.3-23: the king of Babylon; 19.1-15: Egypt).[114] The connection of relief from oppression in Isaiah 51.10 to the Exodus motif is noteworthy in light of the parallels to Exodus 14-15 present in the judgment of the kings and powerful (see above). The theme of hope for those in need of the vindicating activity of God is prominent in both versions of Isaiah and in the *Similitudes*. However, there

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[114] One may investigate further the interesting development in Isa 19.16-25 of both Egypt and Assyria joining Israel in genuine worship of Yahweh.

seems to be, once again, a conscious decision in the *Similitudes* to narrow the referent. The repetition of the phrase "they will hope in my arm" is used in Isaiah 51 of the "nations/islands/inhabitable lands," however, "those who grieve in their hearts" replaces those labels in the *Similitudes*. The primary interests of the author – judgment of oppressor and vindication of oppressed – lead to a reworking of the biblical tradition. The judgment of those who have played the role of "tormentors" is promised in both readings of Isaiah (51.22-23) as well as in the *Similitudes* (48.8-10), albeit through an unexpected inversion of imagery. Both MT and LXX recall the abuse and humiliating treatment of Israel at the hands of their captors who said, "*Bend down your bodies that we may walk over you....*" The author of the *Similitudes* makes use of the same imagery, but now transforms it into a description of the eschatological humiliation ("*they will fall down and no one will take their hands*") of the oppressing "kings" and "sinners."[115]

It appears then that *1 Enoch* 48 largely reflects the tradition present in Isaiah 51 but also develops and appropriates that tradition in significant ways. Most importantly for the present study, these developments appear to move toward a *narrower* understanding of the identity of those who are vindicated on the Day of Judgment. This occurs consistently in the way that key designations – which in certain contexts might be understood to express universal hopes – are interpreted and adapted to suit this narrower perspective. The "Son of Man" is portrayed as the agent through which the light of God's law vindicates the suffering of the righteous and finally brings judgment to those responsible for injustice on earth.

3.3.4.2 *1 Enoch* 50.1-5

A brief summary of the narrative logic of this passage may be offered as follows: in response to the vindication of the righteous and punishment of sinners (50.1-2a), a third group distinguishable from the first two is given the opportunity to "abandon the works of their hands" (50.2b). The impression is created that this unexpected opportunity

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[115] Both VanderKam, "Righteous One," 436-437, and Black, *1 Enoch*, 211, acknowledge the influence of this tradition without exploring its significance. Two further observations illustrate the connections between these texts: (1) Both passages envision the joyful response of the oppressed to the realized judgment by and vindication of God through celebration, singing and rejoicing. The scope of this celebration is broadened in *1 Enoch* 48.5 to "all those who dwell upon the dry ground"; and, (2) The current conditions of suffering for the righteous are explained in both cases by the "hidden" nature of God's redemptive agency (*1 En.* 48.6 – Son of Man; Isa 51.16 – Servant of the Lord). This may in fact refer as much to its cosmic (spatial) certainty as to its temporal realization – the eschatological Day of Judgment.

for salvation results directly from the judgment already meted out to the two groups that otherwise dominate the author's eschatological landscape. For those of the third group who respond with repentance there is the prospect that they "will be saved without honor" (50.3);[116] however, judgment awaits those who still refuse to repent (50.4-5). No further demonstration of mercy is to be expected. That these "others" cannot be equated or identified with "the righteous" in the author's perspective is ensured by the presence of two striking features of this moment of conversion. First, the salvation granted this third group seems to be envisioned *on the Day of Judgment* and after (or, as a result of) the vindication of the righteous. Second, the status for those who do repent nevertheless does not approach the "glory and honor" of the righteous. The reader might thus assume a 'two-tier' system of salvation.

What appears to be the inconsistent character of 50.1-5 with the otherwise dualistic perspective of the *Similitudes* has led some scholars to evaluate it as an interpolation.[117] While the suggestion has been made that this material represents the insertion of a Christian editor, source critics generally classified this as a misplaced strand of tradition. R.H. Charles suggested that this particular vision does not belong to the theological framework of the *Similitudes* and is better suited to the conceptual world of subsequent Enochic writings – possibly chapters 83-90 or 91-104.[118] Alternatively, D.S. Russell cited *1 Enoch* 50 as evidence for the capacity of the apocalyptic genre to hold inconsistent streams of thought in tension – a common recognition among scholars of apocalyptic thought.[119] While this latter observation carries considerable merit on the whole, the more immediate questions of literary context must be examined in this particular instance.

It should be noted that several features of the text actually argue for the relative consistency of 50.1-5 with the rest of the document: (1) the continuing characterization of "oppressing sinners" as standing in judgment and "the righteous" as receiving vindication

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[116] The Ethiopic verb used here is *yedexxenu* (imperfect of *dexna*) and corresponds semantically both to the MT ישע and NT σώζω.

[117] R. Charles, "1 Enoch," in *APOT* (2 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 2:163-281; and Sjoberg, *Der Menschensohn im Aetheopischen Henochbuch*, Lund: C.W.K Gleerup, 1946, who rejected Charles' source divisions but regarded 50.1-4; 56.5-8 and 57.1-3 as later additions (see VanderKam, "Righteous One," 421).

[118] R.H. Charles, "1 Enoch," *APOT*, 2:218.

[119] D.S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic* (London: SPCK, 1964), 301-302.

(here the language of "glory and honor"); (2) the consistent use of the name "Lord of Spirits"[120] which appears throughout the *Similitudes* but is otherwise unattested in Jewish literature (with the possible exceptions of 2 Macc 3.24,[121] and the inscriptional evidence from the island of Rheneia near Delos);[122] and (3) the insistence on affirming the mercy of God in spite of the sure prospect of judgment coheres with subsequent attempts to reconcile these facets of his character and eschatological activity (60.5,25; 61.5,13).[123] The common occurrence of these internal features throughout the *Similitudes* virtually ensures that this particular vision comes from the same source. It is important not to lose sight of the fact that only the issue at hand – namely the unexpected opportunity for the salvation of others beside the named "righteous ones" – leads some commentators to suspect the placement of this vision.

Not only does the consistent appearance in *1 Enoch* 50 of literary conventions otherwise unique to the *Similitudes* suggest literary unity; its vision of an opportunity for salvation on the Day of Judgment may not be entirely isolated within the document. *1 Enoch* 38.4 may contain a veiled reference to the same eschatological idea of a group of people who belong neither to "the righteous" nor to the oppressive rulers and sinners who stand in certain judgment.[124] In the case of 38.4, however, the language is much more vague and the terminology of "others" is not employed. In the final analysis, it appears that taking *1 Enoch* 50 seriously as part of the author's eschatological framework may not

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[120] The literal rendering of the Ethiopic *'egzi'a manafest* which appears to be a wooden translation of the Hebrew יהוה צבאות (Lord of Hosts).

[121] Black, *1 Enoch*, 190.

[122] Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1995 repr. 1927[4]), 413-424. Several publications of this inscription are available of which the most complete is Pierre Roussel and Marcel Launey, *Inscriptions de Delos* (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1937), no. 2532. This prayer for divine retribution against the murderers of two girls appeals "*...to the Most High God, the Lord of the spirits and of all flesh*" (τὸν κύριον τῶν πνευμάτων καὶ πάσης σαρκός). Whether the presence of a definite article (in Greek) significantly alters the idiom's frame of reference cannot be determined at the linguistic level in light of the ambiguity of the Ethiopic language, which does not supply any articular forms. For a fuller treatment of its implications for monotheism and the possibility of an angel cult, see L.T. Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (WUNT 2/70; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck, 1995], 183-185.

[123] Even *1 Enoch* 67.8-13 may be understood as hypothetical and unrealized mercy for the kings and powerful of the earth!

[124] *1 Enoch* 38.4 reads *"And from then on those who possess the earth will not be mighty and exalted, nor will they be able to look at the face of the holy ones...."* Two factors demand caution in drawing too close a connection between these two passages: (1) 38.4 contains no indication of the previous sinfulness and / or need for a moment of conversion on the part of the third group; (2) the 'third group' in 38.4 is not referred to as "others" – the term used here is "those who possess the earth."

only provide a fuller understanding of that framework, but also allows for a reading of *1 Enoch* 38.4 as possibly foreshadowing one of its more subtle nuances.

The emergence of these "others" appears to be a subsidiary part of the main argument in the mind of the author necessitated by the implications of that argument.[125] This may be argued for based on a literary-narrative synthesis of the overall structure of the *Similitudes*. As stated earlier, the driving theme of the work – vindication and judgment – is one from which the author never strays far. His interests appear to lie most urgently with the questions of the 'why' and 'how' of final judgment. In the case of the former, the reasons for final judgment emphasize injustice and oppression by the rich and powerful as well as idolatry. The means of depicting the final judgment include portrayals of the reversal of fortunes for the righteous, visions of eternal dwellings, and scenes of their vindication in the eschatological court. With increasing detail and drama these themes are explored as a way of contextualizing the current difficulties of those who are faithful against the backdrop of eschatological hope. The climactic judgment of the earth's powerful (62.1-63.12) – understood as vindication of "the oppressed righteous" – is the point of departure both for the second parable as a whole (45.1), and for the particular vision of these "others" (50.2a-b). In other words, whatever the author may be suggesting regarding the possible conversion of a third group, he has not abandoned his convictions with respect to the certain judgment of those he views as "sinners." His actual description of the "others" is by no means neutral; they are much more closely aligned with "sinners" than with "the righteous." This is clear from the demand that they "repent and abandon the works of their hands" (50.2c).[126]

At stake for the author of the *Similitudes* is the need to account for those inhabitants of the earth who do not immediately fall into his two primary groups. This raises two possible explanations for the appearance of this third group: (1) Both the community of "the righteous," which the author represents, and their opponents reflect a relatively narrow stratum of society. Therefore, because the (certain) destinies of these

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[125] Paolo Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic and its History* (JSPSup 20; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 117-118. Significantly, Sacchi argues that the author of the Parables conceives of evil in a manner quite different from traditional apocalyptic "despite the use of many traditional elements." The recognition of such possibilities makes the presence of a novel 'sub-stream' of theological material regarding eschatological conversion more plausible.

[126] This is precisely the terminology used in 48.8 to explain why "the kings of the earth and those who possess the dry ground" stand in certain judgment!

two groups are described in cosmic terms and set within the framework of the eschatological Day of Judgment, some accounting for the rest of humanity in those terms must necessarily be provided. (2) The author is simply moved by a theological commitment to the inexorable mercy of God (as noted above).[127] This theme of mercy should hearten those who currently suffer, while also serving to highlight the stubborn posture of those doomed to punishment. The way in which the author has framed this description gives him latitude in several directions. His own principles regarding the twin eschatological realities of vindication and judgment remain firmly intact. Furthermore, he is not necessarily committed to an actualization of this vision. Unlike the unequivocal terms with which the destinies of the two primary groups are depicted, this vision remains entirely in the realm of potential. Its realization depends upon the appropriate response of the hypothetical "others." Ultimately, the final statement of the vision is decidedly negative, as though the author does not actually imagine such a scenario to unfold.

It may not be possible, or even necessary, to choose between the two possible explanations offered above; each in its own right, or both taken together, may provide a plausible literary, theological and circumstantial context for this material. While a case can be made for the author's use and adaptation of biblical traditions at other points in the *Similitudes*,[128] 50.1-5 clearly represents the author's own stamp with respect to such traditions. Those traditions that envision "Gentiles" or "others" in an eschatologically subservient state – with roles such as worship and bringing tribute – do not appear to be reflected in the immediate concerns or description of *1 Enoch* 50. However, even if the image of the "honor-less" third group is his own, the author of the *Similitudes* – not unlike the authors of Jonah, Tobit and other prophetic voices in early Judaism – is motivated both by what he perceives as the necessity for repentance and the persistent presence of God's mercy in light of the Day of Judgment.

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[127] This feature recalls the standard OT conception of the justice and mercy of God as two complimentary aspects of his nature wherein mercy is ultimately the 'default setting'. See Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 421-422.

[128] For example, I have suggested above that the inclusion of the Gentiles in the Son of Man vision in 48.4-5 represents the use and development of parts of Isa 51 (MT), which are also apparent in the LXX.

3.3.4.3 *Scenes of Universal Worship*

Finally, there remain those passages in the *Similitudes*, which envision all of earth's peoples before "the Lord of Spirits" and collectively attribute worship to them. As a result of the author's use of recapitulation throughout the course of the three parables, these scenes of worship are interspersed frequently:

- 39.7 "And I saw their [the righteous] dwelling[129] under the wings of the Lord of Spirits, and all the righteous and chosen shone before him like the light of fire; and their mouth was full of blessing, and their lips praised the name of the Lord of Spirits."

- 48.5 "All those who dwell upon the dry ground will fall down and worship before him, and they will bless, and praise, and celebrate with psalms the name of the Lord of Spirits."

- 51.4-5 "And in those days the mountains will leap like rams, and the hills will skip like lambs satisfied with milk, and all will become angels in heaven. Their faces will shine with joy, for in those days the Chosen One will have risen; and the earth will rejoice, and the righteous will dwell upon it, and the chosen will go and walk upon it."

- 53.1-2 "And there my eyes saw a deep valley, and its mouth was open; and all those who dwell upon the dry ground and the sea and the islands will bring gifts and presents and offerings to him, but that deep valley will not become full. And their hands commit evil, and everything at which (the righteous) toil, the sinners evilly devour;[130] and (so) the sinners will be destroyed from before the Lord of Spirits and will be banished from the face of the earth, unceasingly, for ever and ever."

- 57.3 "And all will fall down and worship the Lord of Spirits."

- 61.12-13 "...and all his chosen ones who dwell in the Garden of Life, and every spirit of light which is able to bless, and praise, and exalt and hallow your holy name, and all flesh which beyond (its) power will praise and bless your name forever and ever. For great (is) the mercy of the Lord of Spirits, and (he is) long-suffering..."

- 63.1-2 "In those days the mighty kings who possess the dry ground will entreat the angels of his punishment[131] to whom they have been handed over that they might give them a little respite, and that they might fall down and worship before the Lord of Spirits, and confess their sin before him. And they will bless and praise the Lord of Spirits, and say, Blessed be the Lord of Spirits and the Lord of kings, the Lord of the mighty and the Lord of the rich..."

The consistent use of universal language in these texts is complicated by the fact that they do not, however, reflect unanimity in terms of the identity of these people. One may suggest two distinct categories for these texts: (1) those passages which present an

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[129] Variant "his dwelling."
[130] The line "and everything...devour" presents textual difficulties and is unclear.
[131] Two minor variants occur: "of punishment;" and, "of his anger."

all-encompassing "macro-view" of the entirety of creation before "the Lord of Spirits" on the Day of Judgment (48.5; 53.1; 57.3; 61.12-13); and, (2) those passages which seem to focus on either the state of "the righteous" following the Day of Judgment (39.7; 51.4), or on the final futility of the "sinners" (53.1; 63.1-2). Some overlap and ambiguity is inherent in such an appraisal in light of the collage of images at the disposal of this apocalyptic writer.

In every instance for both categories, the worship envisioned is described as, and assumed to be, genuine and sincere. From the author's point of view, this must be taken seriously. He operates under the assumption that the Day of Judgment will produce in all creation what should have been present all along – blessing and honor due to "the Lord of Spirits." This insight is crucial in that it leads necessarily to a second observation. Given the range of the texts above, it seems clear that in no way does the author intend the expression of genuine eschatological worship to be either the criterion or the proof that genuine conversion has taken place. These scenes of worship are offered as the inescapable vindication of "the Lord of Spirits" and "the righteous." They cannot be made to stand alone as evidence of their participants' eternal destiny. Such a reading seems to make the best sense of 53.1 where the Isaianic motif of bringing tribute to the King of heaven[132] is employed to illustrate the *unsatisfactory* character of those bringing the gifts. Further, the confession and worship of the kings and powerful in 62-63 is intended to strike the reader as both sincere yet inadequate.

These texts seem to serve purposes other than what the modern reader might wish to find. There may simply exist the possibility that here the apocalypticists attempt to stretch the bounds of language in order to describe a reality beyond description. The language of all-encompassing worship may have served to convey the larger theme of the character of the eschatological Day of Judgment. This leads to a further possibility, namely that vindication of an oppressed minority is a primary purpose of the author. In that case he could certainly believe that such visions of inclusive, all-encompassing worship meet with some degree of success.

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[132] Isa 60.3,5.

3.3.5 Summary

The clearly defined dualism regarding salvation and judgment, which characterizes much of the visionary material in the *Similitudes*, is challenged by several striking moments that move in a more inclusive, universal direction. These moments have been evaluated here for their potential in reflecting an optimistic perspective of the fate of the Gentile nations on the Day of Judgment. In each instance, however, the analysis above has demonstrated that such traditions tended not only to reflect a wider interpretive trajectory, but also served the particular purpose of the author's communicative strategy. In the vision of the "Son of Man" and the Gentiles (48.4-6), the conceptual indebtedness to Isaiah 51 – particularly the interpretive nuances of the LXX – suggests that broad inclusivity in terms of final destiny is not the aim of the author. Similarly, the vision of the "others" (50.1-5) functions to emphasize certain theological values (i.e. God's mercy) rather than provide a programmatic description of Gentile salvation. Finally, those scenes of the Day of Judgment depicting worship before the Lord of Spirits by all of humanity (esp. 62.1-63.12) are qualified by the confession of the participants themselves that such worship alone does not presume nor guarantee salvation.

Participation in the eschatological future by the inhabitants of the earth is thus limited to the scenes of judgment in the *Similitudes*. In light of the author's predominant focus upon two well-defined groups – "the righteous" and "those who rule upon the dry ground" – much of what may be concluded about the final fate of the nations (humanity) must be inferred by extension from what is explicitly stated with regard to these groups. What is apparent from the qualifying language in *1 Enoch* 50.1-5 and the scenes of universal worship is that the author did not envision large-scale participation by the nations in the vindication of the faithful community. Language used to portray universal affirmation of the Lord of Spirits functions primarily to assert the pre-eminence of Israel's God and to validate the present experience of the author's own embattled community.

3.4 4 Ezra[133]

3.4.1 Introduction

The Jewish apocalypse of 4 Ezra (*2 Esdras* 3-14) represents one author's attempt to come to terms with the theological and practical crises arising out of the singularly most devastating event in early Judaism – the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in 70 C.E.[134] These struggles are given voice in the exilic figure of 'Ezra' (initially called Salathiel, 3.1)[135] who both engages in dialogue with an angelic messenger and receives revelatory visions regarding future judgment and God's ordering of things in the world to come. Representing a generation faced with the loss not only of their cultic center but also the core of their identity as a nation,[136] the author sought to come to terms with what such a turn of events implied about the justice of God (theodicy) and the future of Israel as his people. On an even broader scale the possibility of divine responsibility for the sinful plight of humanity is a genuine concern.[137] The result is an enterprise, which betrays doubt, accusation and despair on the one hand yet seeks to commend faith and

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[133] The text used throughout is the translation from the Latin text (edited by R.L. Bensly, *The Fourth Book of Ezra*) by B. Metzger, "The Fourth Book of Ezra," in *OTP*, 1:517-559.

[134] M.E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the book of Fourth Ezra*, (HermCS; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 9-10; and, Bruce W. Longenecker, *2 Esdras* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 13-14. Two internal features of the text, when taken together, suggest a date for the document of around 100 C.E.: (1) the author's attempt to project his apocalypse back to the time of Israel's exile (3.1 – *"In the thirtieth year after the destruction of our city, I Salathiel, who am also called Ezra, was in Babylon"*) suggests that the destruction of the Temple had developed a significance of "exilic proportions" (although note also the suggestion of Patrick Tiller, "Anti-apocalyptic Apocalypse," in *For a Later Generation: The Transformation of Tradition in Israel, Early Judaism and Early Christianity* [Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press International, 2000], 258-265, that the ordinal number may reflect the influence of Ezekiel 1.1); (2) the presence of two developing Hebrew expressions found in the text – עולם (world) and קץ אחרון (last time/age) – that represent a stage of usage which may be placed between that of the Dead Sea Scrolls and that of Mishnaic Hebrew (see M.E. Stone, *Features of the Eschatology of IV Ezra* [HSS 35, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989], 10-11); and, perhaps most importantly, (3) the symbolic characterization of the Roman Empire by the "eagle vision" (11.1-12.51) in which the three heads of the eagle most likely represent the Flavian dynasty (Vespasian, Titus, Domitian), thereby placing the composition of this apocalypse near the end of Domitian's reign (ca. 96 C.E). The earliest certain external evidence is to be found in Clement of Alexandria's *Stromateis* and suggests that 4 Ezra had been translated into Greek by ca. 190 C.E. See also Jacob M. Myers, *1&2 Esdras*, (AB 42; New York: Doubleday, 1974) 299-302; Collins, *Imagination*, 196.

[135] Collins, *Imagination*, 200, observes: "The standard apocalyptic device of pseudonymity already serves to put the problem in a wider perspective. Ostensibly, the occasion of Ezra's perplexity is the catastrophe of 586 B.C.E and the resulting exile. The defeat by Rome is only a reenactment of one of the major paradigms of Jewish history."

[136] Bruce W. Longenecker, "Locating 4th Ezra," *JSJ* 28 (1997): 271-293, has argued for the plausibility of the author's connection to the Yavneh (Jamnia) community based on the lack of sectarian rhetoric and significant similarities to 2 Baruch. While certainly possible, this type of reconstruction of the document's social function seems beyond the scope of both historical and literary data.

[137] Metzger, "Fourth Book," 521.

conviction on the other. Further, it poignantly illustrates how both particularistic and universally inclusive concerns regarding eschatological salvation and judgment might find expression within the framework of a single religious document.

A lengthy history of debate regarding the textual unity of 4 Ezra has been fuelled by several features which suggest narrative inconsistency: the application of varied apocalyptic modes, the tension created by competing eschatological paradigms, and the dynamic shifts in the perspective of Ezra at a literary level. Source critics recognized these difficulties and applied their method with great confidence and detail.[138] Since the influential critique of source theories by H. Gunkel (see below), a gradual consensus among scholars favoring the document's overall unity – if not consistency – has emerged.[139] The question, however, of how such tensions within the text might be understood produced a number of divergent responses (see below). Coming to terms with these conflicts of personality and eschatology in 4 Ezra must include an evaluation of how the author integrated divergent traditions that depict both judgment and a more broadly inclusive hope for salvation.

In order to evaluate the function of universally inclusive texts and the role of the nations in the author's communicative strategy, the following order of inquiry will be taken: (1) an overview of 4 Ezra's literary structure and narrative development; (2) a review of the major theories regarding the internal tensions in 4 Ezra; (3) an exploration of how, if at all, the dynamic of transformation in the central episode (fourth vision) influences the overall characterization of the nations and their ultimate fate; and (4) an analysis of several critical passages which map out the author's perspective on the nature and scope of salvation at the time of 'the End'.

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[138] See the overview of R. Kabisch (1889) and G.H. Box (1913) below.

[139] M.E. Stone, "Coherence and Inconsistency in the Apocalypses: The Case of "the End" in 4 Ezra," in *Selected Studies in Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha: with special reference to the Armenian tradition* (SVTP 9; Leiden: Brill, 1991), 333. See also Stone, *Commentary*, 21-23, where he argues that literary unity and deliberate structuring by the author do not preclude his appropriation of a variety of biblical and post-biblical traditions.

3.4.2 Literary Structure and Narrative Development

The literary structure of 4 Ezra unfolds in seven episodic units[140] that are intentionally signaled by the author. These episodes make use of two apocalyptic modes of communication (dialogue with an angelic guide; revelatory vision) that, whether convincingly or not (see below), each contribute to the overall narrative development of the text. The first three episodes employ a dialogue format and depict a debate between Ezra and the *angelus interpres* Uriel. The fourth unit serves as a turning point in the narrative by depicting a transformation in Ezra and combining both dialogue and vision to create an interactive visionary mode of communication. The last three units make use primarily of a visionary format and allow Ezra (and by implication the audience) to understand current events, prophetically foresee eschatological mysteries, and validate his own mediatory/scribal role.

The first episode (3.1-5.20) establishes the dialogue pattern and introduces Uriel who provides a foil for the skeptical Ezra and represents 'heaven's answer' to the questions that follow. The first point of contention in these dialogues is the problem of God's justice in the face of his apparent abandonment of Israel. Ezra's complaint "*...why has Israel been given over to the Gentiles as a reproach; why the people you loved has been given over to godless tribes...*" (4.23) is met with an ambiguous and unsatisfying response. Uriel replies that the righteous will understand these things in the age to come (4.26) when "*...the number of those like yourselves is completed...*" (4.34-37). Included in Uriel's promise of a coming age is a description of the signs of the end of the present age (5.1-13), which shares symbolic parallels with other Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature.

With a basic repetition of Ezra's initial complaint, the second episode (5.21-6.34) advances the debate further as Ezra seems to specifically challenge God's role in the discipline of his own people: "*If thou doest really hate thy people, they should be punished at thy own hands*" (5.30). He also questions God's timing in bringing the present age to an end because of the agony of seemingly delayed divine judgment (5.41-45). Uriel's threefold response includes: (1) the inference that one who holds such views

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[140] Although commonly referred to as 'visions', the seven episodes as a group do not neatly fit any one label (see Collins, *Imagination*, 197). This seven-fold structure was first proposed by Gustav Volkmar, *Handbuch der Einleitung in die Apokryphen* (2 Bde.; Tübingen, 1860-1863).

demonstrates greater commitment to Israel than to God himself (5.33); (2) a description of eschatological woes to demonstrate the just and comprehensive coming judgment of God (6.13-28); and, (3) a curt exhortation to "*Believe and do not be afraid! Do not be quick to think vain thoughts...*" (6.33-34). If any narrative progression may be discerned from the first episode to the second it is in Ezra's resigned acceptance of God's predetermined ordering of the events of human history (5.47-50). This in no meaningful way satisfies Ezra's questions but does remove his charge against God for apparent inaction.

The third episode (6.35-9.25)[141] redresses the previous concern to some degree but focuses primarily on the small number of those who will be saved and the hopeless plight of the vast majority of humankind. Ezra's lament "*For who among the living is there that has not sinned, or who among men has not transgressed thy covenant?*" (7.46) has obvious universal scope. This breadth of concern, however, seems to be sparked by his realization that Israel as a nation largely shares the label 'sinners' with all other nations and, as such, they are doomed to the same fate. Indeed a strikingly 'anti-Gentile' chord is struck by the author in an effort to re-assert Israel's superiority by virtue of its covenantal relationship with God.[142] By means of a parable, Ezra is told that God delights in the few and will not grieve over the many who perish. It appears at this stage that while Ezra's compassion reaches beyond the boundaries of national Israel, God's own sense of justice according to Uriel is, conversely, much narrower than national Israel. Although he petitions God on behalf of sinners, Ezra is told, "*Many have been created, but few shall be saved*" (8.1-3). These words summarize the consistent perspective of Uriel (7.[60-61],[131]; 8.38-41), which Ezra cannot accept despite repeated exhortations to do so.

The fourth episode (9.26-10.59) introduces a new character into the narrative and combines both dialogue and vision in an interactive revelatory experience. Ezra encounters a woman stricken with grief over the untimely loss of an only son and her subsequent barrenness. Ezra – not yet aware of her identity – responds with both concern

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[141] A lengthy section (7.[36]-[105]) is not present in the oldest Latin manuscript (*Codex Sangermanensis*, 822 C.E.) but seems to have been removed on dogmatic grounds – it includes a denial of the value of prayer for the dead (7.[105]). See Metzger, "Fourth Book," 518.

[142] Longenecker, *2 Esdras*, 40-41, points out that this kind of pejorative view of the nations outside Israel was "...not without parallel in the literature of Early Judaism."

and indignation by suggesting that her grief should be contextualized by the greater tragedy of Israel's desolation and the hopeless plight of sinners. At this point two dramatic transformations occur. First, Ezra's response signals a transformation in him that seems to turn on its head everything he has argued in the previous three episodes. Second, the visual transformation of the woman into a great city representative of Zion (10.25-28) not only embodies Jewish hopes for a restored Jerusalem but also secures this episode's significance as the experiential turning point for Ezra. The crucial nature of this episode to an understanding of what view of the fate of the nations ultimately represents the theology and intention of the author will be explored further (see below).

With the introduction of the fifth episode (11.1-12.51) 4 Ezra enters fully into an apocalyptic visionary mode beginning with an elaborate allegory built upon the imagery of Daniel's vision of the four world kingdoms (Daniel 7.7-8.23). In this "eagle vision" the Roman Empire – characterized as tyrannical and oppressive – is denounced by a messianic figure depicted as a roaring lion. Considerable detail concerning political figures and events suggests that an original audience would have recognized the seer's intentions in those referents. The framework for this vision is primarily nationalistic and temporal. Those events, which signal 'the End', seem to reflect the kinds of concerns related to Israel's present socio-political crises. One also finds evidence that Ezra's self-perception has become less deprecating – he seems willing to accept Uriel's original characterizations of himself as righteous (12.7-9,40-45; cf. 4.36; 6.31-32).

The messianic theme develops along different lines in the sixth episode (13.1-58) with a vision of a "man rising out of the sea" against whom the nations of the world gather in a violent multitude (13.3-5). Unlike the previous vision, this messianic drama is played out on a cosmic stage. As such it contains the most comprehensive view of the final fate of the nations and judgment seems complete as the entire hostile multitude is obliterated (13.8-11). Interestingly, however, there appears afterward a "peaceable multitude" that joins the ranks of the Messiah (13.12-13). Where this group comes from and whom it represents are key issues related to the present inquiry and will be explored further.

The final episode (14.1-48) contains the visionary commissioning of Ezra (14.1-26), his communication of renewed hope and conviction to his community (14.27-36),

and a closing scene of the commissioned scribal activity (14.37-48). Interestingly, this epilogue presents Ezra as both affirming much of what Uriel had argued in the dialogues, and at the same time expressing confidence in certain aspects of the view he had argued for against Uriel: (1) God as righteous judge (14.32), and (2) mercy after death (14.34). The final scene depicts Ezra and five scribal assistants producing and copying both those books that ultimately comprise the Hebrew Scriptures as well as 70 additional 'hidden' books.[143] He thus functions in a mediatory/scribal role – a feature certainly intended to augment the credibility of the document.

3.4.3 Theories Related to Theological Tension in 4 Ezra[144]

Scholars have characterized the tensions that exist within 4 Ezra along two lines: (1) the apparent incongruity of thought in the main character (Ezra); and, (2) the presence of diverse eschatological conceptions and the fluidity with which the 'author' seems to move between them. These features have resulted in a number of theories attempting to address the tensions that may be briefly summarized as follows:

3.4.3.1 R. Kabisch / G.H. Box

At the height of their popularity, source-critical theories held considerable sway in scholarship – especially with regard to early Jewish and Christian apocalypses. By making the most of the unclear authorship issue (3.1), and identifying at least two distinct 'eschatologies', source critics were influential in the interpretation of 4 Ezra. R. Kabisch[145] proposed the following five distinct sources: (1) *S*: the 'Salathiel Apocalypse' reflected in much of the first four episodes; (2) *A*: the 'eagle vision'; (3) *M*: the 'Son of Man vision'; (4) E^1: the final imperative vision to Ezra; and, (5) E^2: a further source providing the eschatological material of the first four episodes. Finally, a redactor was

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[143] Tiller, "Anti-apocalyptic Apocalypse," 264, suggests that Ezra's final vocation as scribe (and not sage) proves in part that the author of the document remains pessimistic even in the face of heavenly and future realities. In this way 4 Ezra does not follow the general trend of apocalyptic – pessimistic regarding the present age, but broadly optimistic about the vindication of God and his faithful ones in the coming age.

[144] For a thorough history of interpretation see Stone, *Commentary*, 11-21; A.L. Thompson, *Responsibility for Evil in the Theodicy of IV Ezra* (SBLDS 29; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977, 85-106; and more recently, Edith McEwan Humphrey, *The Ladies and the Cities: Transformation and Apocalyptic Identity in Joseph and Aeseneth, 4 Ezra, the Apocalypse and The Shepherd of Hermas*, (JSPSup 17; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 59-69.

[145] R. Kabisch, *Das vierte Buch Esra auf seinen Quellen untersucht* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1889).

responsible for composing the links between these sources and making several further revisions.[146]

This identification of sources was endorsed and popularized in the English-speaking world by G.H. Box[147] in spite of intervening critiques that subsequently won the day.[148] In this view the tensions in 4 Ezra are explained primarily as the product of an editorial process, which artificially combined sources with otherwise no discernible coherence. The use of the Ezra-figure was an attempt to commend apocalyptic thought to "certain Rabbinic circles" and "secure for it a permanent place in orthodox Judaism".[149] The Ezra figure of the first four episodes holds little semblance to the Ezra figure of the final three episodes. At work in the former section, Box understood an 'individual eschatology' which was simply at odds with the traditional, messianic hope unsuccessfully reworked in the later section by the redactor.

3.4.3.2 H. Gunkel[150]

As an intentional rebuttal to source-critical theories, Gunkel argued for single authorship, which likely drew upon oral or written traditions but combined them with unique creativity. He attributed the tensions within 4 Ezra to the "torn thoughts" of the author himself. Ezra's and Uriel's words *both* represent the thoughts of an author who is ultimately convinced of the truth of God's reply (Uriel) to his own doubts and questions (Ezra) but has the greatest difficulty accepting and being satisfied with it. The dialogues then explore the religious and ethical dilemmas of the author from opposing points of view – skepticism (Ezra) and faith (Uriel). These two 'opponents' in dialogue ultimately serve the author's purpose together – the debate needs them both.

While recognizing what he believed to be two distinct eschatological frameworks, Gunkel argued that they represented the author's answer for two distinct questions with which he was wrestling. On the one hand, the first question concerning Israel's status and the justice of God necessitated an eschatological perspective with nationalistic outcomes and events. On the other hand, the equally disturbing issue of the seemingly helpless

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[146] Stone, *Commentary*, 12.
[147] He popularized this source theory in his "4 Ezra" in *APOT*, 2:542-617.
[148] Hermann Gunkel published a review of Kabisch in *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 16 (1891), 5-11, and later presented an alternate view (see below).
[149] Box, "4 Ezra," 542.
[150] Hermann Gunkel, "Das vierte Buch Esra," *APAT*, 2:331-401.

plight of sinful humanity as a whole finds its resolution in an eschatological perspective with wider, universalistic themes and referents. According to Gunkel these perspectives are not so much in tension as they are mutually exclusive in that they serve different theological and / or psychological purposes.

3.4.3.3 E. Brandenburger[151] / W. Harnisch[152]

Both scholars argue methodologically for a comprehensive literary approach that finds the logic of the argument in the sum of the whole rather than in isolated parts.[153] Focusing on the dialogues, they identified the convictions of the author with the angelic figure Uriel. They concluded that the author did not align himself in any way with the figure of Ezra, but rather refuted the world-view espoused by the 'Ezra' figure. Brandenburger summarizes "Durch die Gestalt des Esra werden bedrängende Fragen und Klagen, wird ein ganzes Seinsverständnis laut, mit dem sich der Verfasser auseinandersetzt und worauf er durch die Gestalt des Engels als Vertreter Gottes autoritativ antwortet."[154]

Brandenburger does not allow for any sense of development or transformation in the personality and thought of 'Ezra' through the first three episodes and explains the sudden change in the fourth episode (*"das mysterium der Verwandlung"*[155]) as a literary event. Harnisch refines this position further to suggest that more than simply an unsatisfactory 'world-view' occasioned the dialogues. Through the polemic of Uriel the author has in mind a certain 'party' within Judaism, which espouses a dangerously gnostic and universalistic empathy for sinners.[156] Both scholars made much of the unity of thought throughout episodes 1 to 4 and episode 7. Unlike Brandenburger who largely ignores the eschatological implications of episodes 5 and 6, Harnisch regarded them as an

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[151] Egon Brandenburger, *Adam und Christus: Exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Röm.5.12-21 (1 Kor. 15)* (WMANT 7; Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1962).
[152] Wolfgang Harnisch, *Verhängnis und Verheißung der Geschichte: Untersuchungen zum Zeit und Geschichtsverständnis im 4. Buch Esra und in der syr. Baruchsapokalpse* (FRLANT 97; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969).
[153] Harnish, *Verhängnis*, 64.
[154] Brandenburger, *Adam und Christus*, 30.
[155] E. Brandenburger, *Verborgenheit*, 87.
[156] Harnisch, *Verhängnis*, 65.

interpolation. Thus certain tensions have simply been pushed aside without significant consideration.[157]

3.4.3.4 E. Breech[158]

Criticizing both source critics and proponents of literary unity as using *"the visions as seven containers for apocalyptic contents"*,[159] Breech emphasizes the role of structure as determinative of the overall message of the document. He asserts that Ezra represents neither the author nor a group he polemicizes against, but rather that he represents a community in need of consolation. Breech suggests that the lengthy tripartite dialogue is a formal representation of the "invocation, referral, and waiting" of lamentation by a prophet (Ezra in this case) on behalf of his community.[160]

According to Breech Ezra's movement *"from distress to consolation"* reflects the needs of a community dealing with the realities of post-70 C.E. Judaism. The fourth episode, then, is not a representation of Ezra's experience – or even that of the author – but rather, the reflection of what must happen within the community in order for consolation to take place. This consolation is achieved through the "sincere grief" of Ezra, which enables further visions to be received by him. Breech then argues that these visions are not to be understood in the first place as self-contained vehicles of eschatological information. While they do reflect messianic conceptions, they function primarily as reassurances of God's power and control in a difficult and confusing state of affairs.[161] As such the referential significance of the language used in these visions is subordinated to their function as determined by the overall structure of the apocalypse.

3.4.3.5 A.L. Thompson[162]

The tensions in 4 Ezra are never fully resolved according to the view of Thompson who allows that there is a change in the demeanor of Ezra from the fourth episode on but also that his doubts are never quieted and continue to linger. From a literary standpoint, Thompson suggests that the change in Ezra is primarily one of focus –

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[157] A.P. Hayman, "The Problem of Pseudonymity in the Ezra Apocalypse," *JSJ* 7 (1975): 47-56, presents a helpful critique of the weaknesses in both Brandenburger and Harnisch's methodology (see esp. 50-54).
[158] E. Breech, "These Fragments I Have Shored Against my Ruins," *JBL* 92 (1973): 267-274.
[159] Breech, "These Fragments," 268.
[160] Breech, "These Fragments," 271, where he cites the formal parallels with Pss 12, 60 and 85.
[161] Breech, "These Fragments," 273.
[162] A.L. Thompson, *Responsibility*.

he is eventually able to concentrate on the few (i.e. the righteous) instead of the many who are doomed. The questions with universal implications are thus never completely removed from the consciousness of Ezra and Thompson concludes "...to what extent this guarded optimism of the final episodes is able to outweigh the laments of the first three episodes is debatable...the author is in so much turmoil, that his consolation at the end is really not as convincing as it could be."[163]

In chapter four of Thompson's book,[164] he specifically evaluates the tension between Ezra's universal stance and Uriel's extremely narrow perspective regarding the Day of Judgment. Thompson suggests that while both voices reflect the author's thinking (i.e. Ezra = feelings; Uriel = convictions) he is more interested in having Ezra 'heard' in spite of the fact that Uriel's view seems to win out in the end. The impression of the author which one gets from Thompson's reading is that while the author wants to be a universalist (Thompson's term) and is never fully comfortable with the narrower conception of judgment and salvation, he reluctantly accedes to the latter perspective.[165] What does not accompany this transition in Ezra (episode four) is a clear indication that the author moves, correspondingly, from a messianic, 'this-worldly' hope to an 'other-worldly' hope. Thompson finally cites both the tepid response of Ezra in transition and the lack of clarity regarding a coherent view of future judgment, which follows that transition, as evidence that the tensions are resolved only at the surface of the narrative. The issues have not gone away.[166]

3.4.3.6 W. Harrelson[167]

Harrelson's evaluation of the tensions in 4 Ezra concludes that there is in fact no tension in the work of the original author. He maintains that 'Ezra' consistently expresses the view of the author in the dialogues and that his advice to the grieving woman in the fourth episode is the intentionally ironic response of a skeptic. In order to maintain this position as a consistent view, Harrelson rejects the final three episodes as inauthentic and

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[163] Thompson, *Responsibility*, 107.
[164] Thompson, *Responsibility*, 157-256, entitled "From lament over Israel, to lament over all mankind, to consolation for Israel."
[165] Thompson, *Responsibility*, 157,215,234-235.
[166] Thompson, *Responsibility*, 355-356.
[167] Walter Harrelson, "Ezra among the Wicked in 2 Esdras 3-10," in *The Divine Helmsman: Studies on God's Control of Human Events, presented to Lou H. Silberman* (ed. James L. Crenshaw and Samuel Sandmel; New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1980), 21-39.

suggests the same possibility for the angel's interpretation of the woman transfigured in the fourth episode. These moves allow for a broadly universal reading of chapters 3-10 where the last word is the immense city that shares characteristics with the universal visions of Isaiah 2.2-4 and Micah 4.1-4. Two points of ambiguity in the text regarding the city[168] suggest that it functions simply as an overwhelming eschatological reality, "...the sign of the triumph of glory over despair, of love over flat justice...".[169]

Harrelson make a further comparison with biblical precedent for such a reading in that he points to the dialogues between Job and his friends as functioning in the same way as the dialogues between Ezra and Uriel. Both Job and Ezra maintain their positions throughout, and both are ultimately vindicated – albeit in Ezra's case by virtue of Harrelson's informal reconstruction of sources.[170]

3.4.3.7 M.E. Stone / B. Longenecker

Finally, Stone and Longenecker suggest that a case for the unity and coherence of 4 Ezra is to be found in its narrative development rather than in its presentation of theological concepts.[171] As a starting point for evaluating the tensions within the document they suggest that the literary structure and conceptual framework of 4 Ezra reflects the careful work of a single author who made use of certain pre-existent sources.[172] Resolution of the tension within the Ezra figure is accomplished by means of a 'religious experience' or 'conversion' on the part of Ezra in the crucial fourth episode. Unlike Brandenburger and Harnisch, however, this view does not suggest that the argumentation of the angel Uriel has been entirely fruitless. In fact, Stone and Longenecker argue that movement *toward* a religious experience in the fourth episode

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[168] Harrelson, "Ezra among the Wicked", 36-37, argues that (1) how the transformation of the heavenly Zion occurs is simply unaccounted for; and, (2) the immense city is never explicitly named in a particularistic way.

[169] Harrelson, "Ezra among the Wicked," 37.

[170] Humphrey, *The Ladies*, 60-61, criticizes Harrelson's "Procrustean removal" of certain texts as little more than a revival of Kabisch's "Salathiel Apocalypse", and suggests that his interpretation is "emotionally satisfying to the modern reader" and "(ambitiously) inferring universalistic dogma."

[171] Stone, *Commentary*, 13-14 n.103.

[172] According to Stone, *Commentary*, 22, certain passages seem to reflect prior traditions: the 'man from the sea' dream (episode 6); the lament of the woman (episode 4); the 'souls of the righteous' passage (4.35-37); the description of Behemoth and Leviathan (episode 2); the reappearance of the ten tribes in the interpretation of the dream (episode 6).

may be discerned as the first three dialogues unfold.[173] Transformation takes place in Ezra through his encounter with the grieving woman and re-forms his doubts – although it does not answer them on a rational level – into conviction and trust in the ultimate purposes of God.

Stone also relates the issue of how the diverse eschatological concepts might best be understood directly to authorial intention. In the first place he suggest that 7.26-44 represents the most comprehensive outline of the author's eschatological framework.[174] Further, Stone has persuasively argued that the multiple uses of eschatological points of reference in differing settings are the result of "associational complexes."[175] This refers to the way in which the author used eschatological concepts based not on consistency with other uses, but rather on the way those referents cohere with specific problems being addressed. Longenecker states in agreement "...the author was not concerned with logical consistency in his eschatological descriptions, but used various eschatological ideas simply to support different points of argument at different places in his presentation." [176]

3.4.3.8 Summary

Although there is no shortage of views on the nature of tension and its resolution in 4 Ezra, certain elements of the debate have become widely held assumptions. The following conclusions regarding this considerable debate will serve as foundational assumptions for the remaining analysis of the present inquiry: (1) the document is best understood as a literary whole with a structural framework intentionally crafted by the author; (2) both Ezra and Uriel represent the thought of an author who refuses simplistic answers to difficult theological problems and avoids the triumphalism of blatantly nationalistic eschatology; (3) the key to understanding the author's own resolution of the tension between the viewpoints of Ezra and Uriel is the transformation of Ezra in the fourth episode; and (4) the eschatological framework does not necessarily follow contemporary conceptions of "consistency" but does reflect a coherent line of thinking on the part of the author. Language that describes eschatological hopes in either

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[173] Longenecker, *2 Esdras*, 62-64, also makes a case that this transformation is anticipated by certain literary signals in the introduction to the fourth episode prior to the appearance of the mourning woman (see below).
[174] Stone, "Coherence," 334, and *Commentary*, 38-40.
[175] Stone, "Coherence," 345-347, and Stone, *Commentary*, passim.
[176] Longenecker, *2 Esdras*, 23.

particularistic or universal terms must therefore be evaluated in light of its situational complex and the way that complex fits the author's overall eschatological framework.

3.4.4 Transformation as the Interpretive Key

Several recent treatments of 4 Ezra have recognized the crucial role of the fourth episode in its narrative development. In his survey of apocalyptic literature, Collins observes "The central problem of interpretation of 4 Ezra undoubtedly concerns the transition of Ezra from skeptic to believer. This problem is basic to our understanding of the purpose and coherence of the book."[177] This vision of the distraught woman (9.26-10.59) who represents Zion signals a crucial transformation in the Ezra figure. Here the woman seems to assume the role, which Ezra held in the first three episodes while he assumes the role of the angel Uriel. This shift in the protagonist's perspective from the 'questioning Ezra' of the first three episodes to the 'Ezra of conviction' has been described as no less than 'conversion'. Most recently, Bruce Longenecker has argued that while this transformation is unmistakable in the vision proper (9.38-10.24), the author signals this shift even earlier in the text. Longenecker points to the change in angelic instructions to Ezra – both in terms of diet (no longer fasting, 9.23) and location (no longer in a house but now in a field, 9.24) – and to the change in Ezra's tone. These changes, together with the absence of complaint against God in a surprising defence of the Law (rather than sympathy for the plight of Israel and humanity), cumulatively present a different Ezra from the fourth episode on.[178] Stone argues that there is narrative development or progression in the 'Ezra character' throughout the first three episodes, culminating with this dramatic visionary experience.[179]

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[177] Collins, *Imagination*, 199. Humphrey, *The Ladies*, 57-81, specifically evaluates the fourth episode for its transformation motif alongside three other apocalypses with similarities. See also Brandenburger, *Verborgenheit*, 66; Stone, *Commentary*, 17-18, 31-33; and Tom Willet, *Eschatology in the Theodicies of 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra* (JSPSup 4; Sheffield: JSOT Press), 62-65.

[178] Longenecker, *2 Esdras*, 59-62, lists the similarities between the woman and the "old Ezra" as well as the similarities between Uriel and the "new Ezra."

[179] Stone, *Commentary*, 24-28, describes the following examples of narrative progression: (1) Ezra accepts Uriel's premise that the order of events in human history are predetermined – a modification of his own views; (2) Ezra admits the limitations of his ability to understand God's ways; (3) Ezra experiences a religious / psychological conversion. Stone observes, "Ezra's development, unlike that in Platonic dialogue, does not start at a certain point and progress regularly step by step from beginning to end. It starts, advances, regresses, advances some more, returns to earlier issues, and so forth" (28). Willet, *Eschatology*, 65, argues that while the third episode begins like the first two with a prayer of complaint, Uriel's response

This transformation is confirmed by the way in which Ezra responds to the woman's grief-stricken state. The reader becomes aware that the woman in fact exhibits striking similarities to the Ezra of the first three episodes. Conversely, the perspective of Uriel from the first three episodes – both theology and rhetoric – finds voice in the 'transformed' Ezra himself. As Ezra attempts to exhort the woman to regain perspective and contextualize her grief, she is suddenly transformed into a great city representative of the heavenly Zion. The result of this transformation episode is: (1) to validate the position articulated initially by Uriel; (2) to bridge the first three episodes with the last three – both in terms of form and content; (3) to prepare the reader for the eschatological visions which describe the details of this theological perspective; and (4) to present a 'narrowing' both of Ezra as a character, and in the overall scope of the document with respect to the nature of salvation and the fate of the nations. This overall narrative trajectory toward a narrowing perspective regarding the possibility of salvation for only "the few" (cf. 8.1-3) provides the narrative context in which to consider several relevant texts.

3.4.5 Universal Traditions in 4 Ezra

The question of how the author of 4 Ezra conceives of the fate of the nations appears to have a decidedly negative answer. Several instances in the opening dialogues from both Uriel (7.37-38) and Ezra (4.23; 5.23-30; 6.55-57) betray a negative view of Gentile nations. Despite this, one detects in Ezra a tone of empathy for the plight of the sinner – Jew and (sometimes) Gentile – in these early dialogues. He is often moved with compassion beyond the bounds of national Israel (4.38-39; 7.17-18,[62]-[69],[116]-[126],[132]-[140]; 8.26-36). This might lead the contemporary reader to expect that a 'conversion experience' for Ezra would result in an even broader perspective, but this is not in fact what we find. As noted above, the transformation of Ezra from the fourth episode onward aligns his perspective with the narrower view articulated by Uriel in the early dialogues. This resolution creates a certain narrative consistency – although

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in a series of rhetorical questions marks a change in tactic. These questions, unlike the angel's first two responses, actually address Ezra's complaints thus moving their dialogue beyond the apparent impasse. Willet further suggests that 7.45 marks an important point of transition in the narrative as Ezra "changes the direction of the argument." While these observations may belong to what Stone describes as "narrative progression," the actual point of transformation in the Ezra-figure is best understood as taking place in the fourth episode as Longenecker suggests.

certainly not satisfying Ezra's early questions on a (theo-) logical level[180] – and has obvious implications for how the fate of the nations is conceived by the author.

At the same time, the narrative logic of the document can only be described as consistent when any potentially problematic texts have either been reconciled or, at the very least, contextualized as part of an intentionally fostered tension within the overall theological trajectory of 4 Ezra. With this in mind, three passages, which present hints of a more universally inclusive perspective, demand closer evaluation: 6.25-28; 11-12; and 13.

3.4.5.1 4 Ezra 6.25-28

> [25]"And it shall be that whoever remains after all that I have foretold to you shall himself be saved and shall see my salvation and the end of my world. [26]And they shall see the men who were taken up, who from their birth have not tasted death; and the heart of the earth's inhabitants shall be changed and converted to a different spirit. [27]For evil shall be blotted out, and deceit shall be quenched; [28]faithfulness shall flourish, and corruption shall be overcome, and the truth which has been so long without fruit, shall be revealed."

Literary Context

In the second episode Ezra argued that God's delay in bringing about the final judgment not only allowed an increase of sin and misery in the present age but, more importantly, also permitted Israel's exile and humiliation (5.23-30). His argument implies that if only God had shortened the opportunity for disobedience by inaugurating the next age more speedily (5.42-43), Israel would have been preserved as his own "chosen lily" from among all that was created.[181] It is this theme of creation – and the issue of Israel's election from among all that is created – which serves as the theological landscape for the rhetoric and imagery of this second episode. In fact, a restored creation was a significant element in Ezra's understanding of what Israel's vindication should entail.[182] According to the angelic messenger, the present 'delay' in final, just judgment in no way subverts its ultimate certainty (6.6,13-16). This text then, envisions the universal effects of God's

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[180] Several commentators have pointed out the presence of this surface resolution. See particularly Thompson, *Responsibility*, 355-356; and Stone *Commentary*, 31,36, who states "...these commonplace answers served the author as adequate responses to the profound questions that he posed. By adequate we do not mean theologically adequate but religiously satisfying."

[181] The negative undercurrent implied here regarding the Gentile nations anticipates the explicit statement by Ezra to that effect in the third episode (6.55-59).

[182] Notice the prominence of this creation/recreation motif in Ezra's argument in the third episode (6.38-59). This motif features especially prominently in the idealized vision of the future age in the *Animal Apocalypse* (*1 Enoch* 90.30-37, see below 3.5).

final, just judgment at the time of the End (6.18-28) and – at least from the perspective of Uriel – should serve to answer any doubts Ezra might have regarding God's justice and keeping of covenant with his people.

Analysis

The present text (6.25-28) represents the concluding words of Uriel in response to Ezra's questioning of God's timing. It also represents a shift in literary style and tone – the eschatological signs are no longer omens of woe, but rather poetic promises of redemption.[183] The first feature of this text that requires closer attention is the phrase "earth's inhabitants" and the level of inclusiveness it implies regarding the promised redemption. Elsewhere in 4 Ezra "earth's inhabitants" is a stock phrase with negative connotations vis-à-vis humanity's posture toward God.[184] Either the author includes a tradition that radically departs from everything else the reader has come to expect from Uriel, or something within the eschatological description itself allows him to re-apply this term uniquely within this document. The opening words of the redemption promise are crucial "*And it shall come to pass that whoever remains after all that I have foretold to you shall himself be saved.*" As Stone points out, operating throughout the narrative trajectory of 4 Ezra is the motif of *the remnant of Israel* – i.e. "those who survive" the messianic woes and participate in the future age (cf. 7.27; 9.7-8; 13.16,19).[185] Thus, by virtue of its location in the larger narrative logic of 4 Ezra, the present text reveals a promise of redemption that is not merely ethnically but, even more narrowly, ethically conditioned. The use therefore of the phrase "earth's inhabitants" appears to function in a generic but limited sense of "those who are left on earth" rather than as a circumlocution for all peoples or nations in any positive sense.

A second feature of 6.25-28, related to the first, is the question of what type of conversion is signaled by a scenario wherein "*the heart of earth's inhabitants shall be changed and converted to a different spirit.*" The use of ethical language – particularly

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[183] Stone, *Commentary*, 167-168.

[184] See also 3.9,35; 5.1,6; 6.18; 7.[72-74]; 8.50; 11.5,32-34; 12.23-24; 13.29-38; 14.17. This same phrase is considered in greater detail in terms of its function in apocalyptic thought generally and in the overall rhetoric of Revelation specifically (see chapter 5 below).

[185] Stone, *Commentary*, 148,171, also states out that, more specifically, this motif of the remnant refers to "those who survive the great eschatological battle waged by the Redeemer" (cf.12.34; 13.26,48-49). Further, he suggests that this motif is present conceptually in 13.13 "where survival is limited to those in the land."

the reference to a "changed heart" – picks up an important motif first raised by Ezra in his initial complaint (3.20-22,26).[186] In that larger context (3.4-27) he blamed Israel's failures on an evil heart.[187] Thus as a further recurring motif, we find Ezra's belief in an inclination toward evil as the plight of all humanity included Israel (cf. 9.36).[188] Earlier, Ezra's opinion of himself included this conviction – he too, is one who is weak (4.38-39). While careful not to blame God directly for this state of affairs, Ezra does attribute this inclination toward evil as part of the present created order. Thus it becomes apparent that those who survive the messianic woes and eschatological battle of the Redeemer undergo a transformation not unlike the rest of creation (6.14-16).

In this way, one may interpret this statement as the angel's attempt to deflect Ezra's attention away from present conditions to the future age. Uriel's response is intended to relocate any present expectation of justice and vindication for Israel to the future age – all the while using language that Ezra used to describe the present, evil age. Thus Ezra is instructed to await a time when the faithful in Israel (here a narrower remnant) experience the promise of salvation and restoration of creation that is yet unfulfilled. The conditions of that future time are described in terms that assert a universal state free of sin and corruption where those who remain to inhabit the earth are characterized by purity and truth of heart. The contribution of this statement by Uriel to the overall narrative trajectory of 4 Ezra is that it anticipates two further descriptions of the conditions surrounding the Day of Judgment.

3.4.5.2 <u>4 Ezra 11.38-12.34</u> (dream/interpretation)

> [11.44] Therefore you will surely disappear, you eagle, and you terrifying wings, and your most evil little wings, and your malicious heads, and your most evil talons, and your whole worthless body, so that the whole earth, freed from your violence, may be refreshed and relieved, and may hope for the judgment and mercy of him who made it... [12.34]But he will deliver in mercy the remnant of my people, those who have been saved throughout my borders, and he will make them joyful until the end comes, the day of judgment, of which I spoke to you at the beginning...'"

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[186] This language is reminiscent of the prophetic tradition in Jer 31.33; Ezek 37.14 (cf. Ezek 37.2 LXX). But note also the very particularistic context of a similar ethical description of the eschatological future in 1QS 3.6b-12.

[187] Willet, *Eschatology*, 66-67.

[188] Stone, *Commentary*, 63-67, suggests that the author of 4 Ezra provides a parallel expression for this motif of the "evil inclination" – the image of sowing and harvest used in 4.30. With the latter image, the author more fully develops the idea that this will be "eschatologically rectified" (4.32; cf. 8.6). See also, Willet, *Eschatology*, 71.

Literary Context

With the transformation of Ezra in the fourth episode and his complete reversal of perspective, he is privileged with revelatory insight (see above on the narrative effects of character transformation).[189] The focus of the fifth and sixth episodes is to provide – in the form of dream visions – some description of and accounting for present events in a hostile world in light of God's coming judgment.[190] In particular, the fifth episode (11.1-12.39) offers a critique/judgment of an oppressive political entity (Rome signified by an eagle) at the hands of a messianic "Lion" figure. Through his reference to the eagle as "the fourth beast" (11.38-40), the author – by his own account (12.11-12) – incorporates the common apocalyptic convention of configuring political history based on Daniel's four-kingdom scheme (Dan 2.31-45; 7.2-27; 8.3-26).[191] In its various literary contexts this tradition portrays humanity in its entirety as being under the dominion of successive world powers/rulers.[192] Thus, although the narrative horizon of the fifth episode appears more specifically focused than that of the sixth episode (see below), nevertheless, the author adopts and develops a tradition that, at least implicitly, is largely universal.

Apparently, then, 11.1-35 functions as coded allegory of a political situation easily recognizable to a 1st century C.E. audience but whose details, however, are no longer apparent to the modern reader.[193] The anticipated response of the messianic figure to this crisis (11.36-12.3a) signals the utter ruin of the eagle's pretentious rule. Of considerable interest here is that feature of the dream, which envisions "the whole earth" benefiting from the messianic agent's intervention (11.44-46). Following the seer's plea for understanding (12.3b-9), an interpretation of the dream is offered by the *angelus interpres* Uriel (12.10-34). This interpretation, however, leaves the reader unsatisfied on

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[189] Longenecker *2 Esdras*, 70, notes however, that this state of affairs is not immediately obvious to Ezra himself as evidenced by his terror at the vision (12.3b,5).

[190] Both the fifth and sixth episodes are presented in a similar format: dream (11.1-12.3a and 13.1-13a), plea for understanding by the seer (12.3b-9 and 13.13b-20a), and interpretation (12.10-34 and 13.21-52) (see also Longenecker, *2 Esdras*, 70-71).

[191] Stone, *Commentary*, 361-366, examines the role of Daniel's four-kingdom paradigm in apocalyptic historiography and makes reference to more recent attempts to locate this scheme in earlier Persian and Greek eschatology.

[192] Apart from Dan 2; 7; and 4 Ezra 11-12; also *2 Bar.* 39-40. See Volz, *Die Eschatologie der Jüdischen Gemeinde* (2nd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr, 1934), 311 (cited by Stone, *Commentary*, 361).

[193] In Dan 7 the fourth kingdom that precedes the messianic advent is most likely Greek; the author of 4 Ezra, however, undoubtedly has Rome in mind. Longenecker, *2 Esdras*, 73, suggests the possibility that the reference to "the three heads" (11.1) could reflect the reigns of Vespasian (69-79 C.E.), Titus (79-81 C.E.), and Domitian (81-96 C.E.) respectively.

several grounds. First, apart from the explanation of some key symbols in the dream (i.e. eagle = Rome depicted as Daniel's fourth kingdom; heads / wings = kings; Lion = messianic agent), there is very little material provided that actually contributes meaning and detail for the reader. Further, a certain selectivity and imbalance regarding which dream details are explored characterizes the interpretation (this is even more pronounced in the sixth episode). This suggests that some aspects of the dream vision bear special significance for the author while others are either less important or, indeed, intentionally avoided.[194] In the case of 11.44-46, its explanation avoids dealing with the notion of a positive universal perspective and introduces much more limiting parameters – the concept of a faithful remnant of the people of God (12.33-34).

Analysis

In the dream portion of this fifth episode, a significantly universal scope is apparent in the author's use of language. The primary issue raised by the visionary statement in 11.44-46 concerns the purpose of the all-encompassing phrase "the whole earth." Throughout the dream vision this inclusive phrase appears with regularity (11.2,5-6,12,16,32,34,40-41,46; 12.3a).[195] Although not entirely uniform in these various constructions, it functions in a manner similar to the more idiomatic phrase "the inhabitants of earth" (see below, Chapter 5). Closer analysis of the climactic moments of the dream vision suggests that, for several reasons, it is not possible to regard the inclusive references as pointing to a universal conversion of the earth's inhabitants. To begin, the function of such inclusive language in the dream is primarily to convey the scope of the vision. It is apparent that this formulation reflects both the range of the eagle's oppressive regime (esp. 11.32,40-41) and the comprehensive effect of the Lion's intervention (11.43-44). Further, the images employed by the author are not primarily royal or militaristic, but rather legal in nature.[196] The singular focus of the dream is with appropriate divine (messianic) response to the injustice and ruthless pride of the eagle and leaves to one side questions of the fate of those who dwell on earth. Therefore the

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[194] Stone, "Coherence," 342-347, has made the important observation that whether or not dream and interpretation effectively match in the mind of the modern reader, these interpretations reflect what the author believed, or wanted, the dreams to represent.

[195] Stone, *Commentary*, 349, notes the similarities of this vision to Isa 14 – and, in particular, the emphasis on "the whole earth" (Isa 14.26).

[196] Stone, *Commentary*, 347,351-352.

predominant concern in this court setting is justice – judgment of the eagle, and mercy (relief) from its terrors for the oppressed. Related to this emphasis on the judgment of the eagle is the implicit contrast between the eagle's reign of terror and the messianic rule characterized by justice. Thirdly, the final word on the response of "the earth" to the burning of the eagle's body is terror (12.3a). This indicates again from a different vantage point that only the Lion's dealings with the eagle are in view. How those who live on earth ultimately align themselves with respect to the Most High is simply not in the mind of the author at this stage. This last observation may, in part, account for the presence of a second dream vision (sixth episode) that appears to overlap significantly with this first one (see below).

Crucial to our understanding of the text under consideration (11.44-46), its subsequent interpretation explicitly confirms that no expectation of universal salvation is envisioned (12.31-34). In fact, no attempt is made at all to acknowledge or explain the broad scope of the term "the whole earth"; rather, what the author supplies is an explanation that recalls the motif of a faithful remnant in Israel.[197] Thus he remains consistent to the primary concern we have observed in the narrative trajectory of 4 Ezra that "the few will be saved" (8.1-3). This element of eschatological expectation resonates with other points in the narrative where a similar concept is put forward (5.41; 7.27-28; 9.8).[198] By appealing to the tradition of the remnant, the interpretation completely avoids explicating the inclusive language. This is borne out by the descriptions of the victims in 11.40-42 ("meek," "peaceable," "those who tell the truth"), which reappear in the sixth episode as designations for the faithful.

In summary, both the function of the inclusive language in the dream portion of the fifth episode and the author's unexpected re-orientation to a particularistic tradition in its interpretation undermine any serious universalizing reading of 11.44-46. Clearly the dream serves to delineate the full range of the eagle's power and the interpretation maintains the narrow nationalistic and ethical distinctions with respect to eschatological salvation found elsewhere in the document. One may leave open this question only to the extent that the fate of the nations is ultimately not even on the radar of the author in this

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[197] Stone, "Coherence," 340-341.
[198] Stone, *Commentary*, 204-207, and throughout.

fifth episode. Inclusive language simply sets locative boundaries for the judgment of a political regime hostile to, among others, the people of God.

3.4.5.3 4 Ezra 13.5,9-12, 37-39, 48-49 (dream / interpretation)

> [5]"After this I looked, and behold, an innumerable multitude of men were gathered together from the four winds of heaven to make war against the man who came up out of the sea... [9] And behold, when he saw the onrush of the approaching multitude, he neither lifted his hand nor held a spear or any weapon of war; [10] but I saw only how he sent forth from his mouth as it were a stream of fire, and from his lips a flaming breath, and from his tongue he shot forth a storm of sparks. [11] All these were mingled together, the stream of fire and the flaming breath and the great storm, and fell on the onrushing multitude which was prepared to fight, and burned them all up, so that suddenly nothing was seen of the innumerable multitude but only the dust of ashes and the smell of smoke. When I saw it, I was amazed. [12] After this I saw the same man come down from the mountain and call to him another multitude which was peaceable. Then many people came to him, some of whom were joyful and some sorrowful; some of them were bound, and some were bringing others as offerings... [37] And he, my Son, will reprove the assembled nations for their ungodliness (this was symbolized by the storm), [38] and will reproach them to their face with their evil thoughts and with the torments with which they are to be tortured (which were symbolized by the flames); and he will destroy them without effort by the law (which was symbolized by the fire). [39] And as for your seeing him gather to himself another multitude that was peaceable, these are the ten tribes which were led away from their own land into captivity in the days of King Hoshea... [48] But those who are left of your people, who are found within my holy borders, shall be saved. [49] Therefore when he destroys the multitude of the nations that are gathered together, he will defend the people who remain."

Literary Context

The literary similarities between the fifth and sixth episode are many. Both their significant overlap – in terms of structure, narrative purpose and rhetorical impact – and their thematic departure from the first four episodes have been noted.[199] As with the setting of the preceding vision (11.2), those images and symbols descriptive of a messianic agent have their roots in Daniel's vision of a "son of man" (Dan 7.2,13-14). The description of the man who appears out of the sea (13.2-4) reflects motifs taken from biblical traditions, which portray God or his messianic agent as divine warrior.[200] One of the distinctive features of the sixth episode, however, is its movement away from themes and issues arising out of the author's immediate present (i.e. political and economic). Rather, the horizon of this vision operates more broadly and comprehensively on a cosmic scale than that of the fifth episode. The result is that the author here draws the

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[199] See the general review of Stone, *Commentary*, 11-21, and in particular his evaluation of source theories regarding the fifth and sixth episodes (398-400).

[200] Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 383; Longenecker, *2 Esdras*, 79. These various traditions related to either God, or more specifically, a "son of man" figure appear in Dan 7.2,13; Exod 19.9; Ps 97.5; 104.3; Mic 1.4; cf. Jdt 16.15; 4 Ezra 8.23 and *1 En.* 1.6. Stone observes "The stirring of waves, the flying on the clouds, and melting like wax all together evoke a very specific set of associations."

widest possible range of participants into this depiction of the eschatological drama, and diminishes the importance of temporal categories.[201] The overall tone of the vision and its subsequent interpretation anticipates negative judgment of the majority of humanity and implies salvation (vindication) for a faithful remnant within Israel (13.48; cf. 12.34, where the concept of a 'remnant' is explicitly stated). Thus, while utilizing the broadest scope of concern in the document, it is not immediately obvious that such scope also signals inclusivity with respect to the author's view of salvation in the eschaton.

A crucial feature of this episode is the well-documented points of dissonance between the dream vision (13.2-13a) and its interpretation (13.20b-55).[202] The interpretation given for the "peaceable multitude" (13.39-50) is of particular interest. Not only has the author provided an explanation, which appears out of proportion to the rest of the interpretation, the content of the interpretation itself is rather obscure. Of considerable importance is the fact that this interpretation simply does not address those features of the dream, which commentators have often understood to make room for the presence of Gentiles (see analysis below). Thus, the interplay between the traditions that the author makes use of, and the way in which he shapes their reception through the dream's interpretation are highly significant.

Analysis

The gathering for war of an innumerable multitude against the messianic agent is depicted with language that suggests finality and universal participation – "gathered from the four winds of heaven" (13.5,8). In his depiction of the battle between the man from the sea and the innumerable multitude,[203] the author has taken up biblical traditions that

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[201] Longenecker, *2 Esdras*, 78, "Whereas the messianic figure is described in similar terms in both episodes, the culprit whom he opposes in episode V is a specific manifestation of evil within the political sphere (Rome) while in episode VI the opposition that arises up against him is from an innumerable 'multitude' (13.5,9,11,28,34) comprising 'all the nations' of the earth (13.33) with a much more universal, much less political focus."

[202] Stone, *Commentary*, 396, observes, "The interpretation is complicated, diffuse, and somewhat incoherent. In order to evaluate the particular points made by the author, it is interesting to inquire which elements of the dream are not interpreted at all and which elements of the interpretation are not based on elements in the dream.

[203] The term "innumerable multitude" also appeared in Ezra's dialogue with Uriel (7.70[140]) where – prior to his transformation (see above) – Ezra still maintained the compassionate hope that God's mercy could surely not overlook the plight of both Jewish and Gentile sinners. The narrative movement of the document, however, suggests that by this sixth episode such universal compassion has been abandoned and the term simply designates all humanity who remained opposed to God.

pit antagonistic humanity against God.[204] Stone notes that the association of both fiery breath and divine speech (13.9-10) as instruments of the judging activity of God is common in such traditions. The two most influential texts for the development of this adaptation of the eschatological divine judgment motif in the 2TP were Isaiah 11.4 and Psalm 2.9.[205] The data from other examples of this exegetical tradition in early Jewish and Christian literature reveals that it was consistently understood to represent the damning judgment of humanity set against God.

Resolution of this dramatic encounter occurs through the seemingly effortless annihilation of the "innumerable multitude" by the man from the sea (13.11). The rhetoric building toward a final, eschatological resolution seems to apply a damning fate on the nations/inhabitants of the earth. However, the precise identity and function of the "peaceable multitude" which suddenly appears in the narrative of the vision must be evaluated for its possibilities (13.12). Has the author found a tradition through which to give further voice to his earlier concerns for the fate of humanity (esp. 7.[45]-[48],62[132]-70[140])? Or, does this tradition, with its interpretation related to the so-called "lost tribes," represent a way for the author to articulate the vindication of Israel as the people of God?

Two features of the author's description of the "peaceable multitude" in 13.13a deserve further attention. First, he describes them as "many people," perhaps with the intent of giving his Jewish readership a sense of optimism at the size of this remaining group. The language itself, however, simply doesn't approach the inclusivity and implied size of the earlier "innumerable multitude." The general sense of the qualifying phrases "...some of whom were joyful and some sorrowful; some of them were bound..." calls to mind biblical traditions concerned with the return of the exiles to Palestine.[206] Second, by including the final phrase "and some were bringing others as offerings"[207] the author moves beyond the use of traditions, which envision only the return of Israelite exiles.

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[204] Stone, *Commentary*, 385, suggests Deut 28.49; Joel 2.1-10; Ps 2.1-2; Zech 14.2, and esp. Ezek 38-39.
[205] Stone, *Commentary*, 383, 386-387, gives a more detailed analysis of this motif in biblical and 2TP literature. A precursor to 4 Ezra is the vision of the Davidic Messiah in *Pss. Sol.* 17.23-24,35 with further examples of this exegetical trajectory in *1En.* 62.2; Rev 19.15 (see further Chapter 5).
[206] For example Jer 29.14; 30.8-11; 46.27-28; Ezek.37.21-23; Zech.10.9.
[207] It may well be significant that this final phrase is omitted in the Ethiopic, Armenian and Arabic2 versions and found only in the Latin, Syriac and some Arabic1 versions (Stone, *Commentary*, 382). The use of the word "others" forms a potentially interesting parallel to *1 Enoch* 50 (see above).

This phrase recalls other traditions in which some subservient Gentile activity accentuates the ultimate vindication of faithful Jews.[208] By combining these distinct ways of describing Israel's vindication, the author reflects common biblical patterns of conceiving God's activity in the eschatological future. On the one hand, the people of God are exclusively in view as those who are rescued and vindicated. On the other hand, however, there is room to include Gentile activity – in spite of other statements that would appear to signal their doom – as it contributes to this larger concern of vindication.

Before moving to the interpretation of the vision for further clues as to the identity of the referents in 13.12-13a, it is important to identify those biblical traditions which – albeit somewhat obliquely – shaped this final sequence of the dream vision. Whom does the author refer to as "others as offerings"? Stone cites the "common opinion" of commentators that the verse describes the ingathering of converted Gentiles ("the sorrowful") who bring with them the dispersed Israelites ("the joyous").[209] Longenecker, however, argues that the character of 13.12-13 is largely "nationalistic" and that various segments of Jewry are envisioned – both Judean and Diaspora Jews.[210] Whether or not this can be proven conclusively, the interpretation (13.25-52) make clear that the author's perspective is ultimately national (and ethical) rather than universal. The interpretation fuses together disjointed strands of tradition that find their coherence in nationalistic language.[211] Much like the 'eagle vision' interpretation, universal language is abandoned here and the author's 'remnant theology' emerges as the final eschatological word.

3.4.6 Summary

The crisis of faith that occasioned 4 Ezra deals predominantly with the issue of theodicy – the question of how God's judgment and mercy may be reconciled in light of humanity's propensity to sin. This human dilemma is explored through various forms of revelatory dialogue and dream/vision experience between the angel Uriel and the seer Ezra. Throughout the seven episodes a narrow, exclusivist expression of eschatological hope is maintained. This perspective, however, originates with Uriel and is initially

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[208] Most significant here are the Isaianic visions of the return of the exiles (66.14-21 and 60.3-5; cf. also 43.4-6; 49.18-23).
[209] Stone, *Commentary*, 387.
[210] Longenecker, *2 Esdras*, 80.
[211] Stone, "Commentary," 404.

challenged by the Ezra-figure who articulates concern first for Israel, but also for humanity at large. A transformation in Ezra (episode four) begins to resolve this tension at the narrative level – although not totally convincing from a theological or existential point of view – and prepares the reader for insight into conditions in the eschatological future. At several points in the narrative, these dialogues and dream experiences address the fate of earth's inhabitants in the events associated with the coming messianic kingdom and the Day of Judgment. Several important observations emerge from the author's treatment of this theme – two broader narrative tendencies and two specific exegetical comments.

First, the narrative trajectory of the document remains consistently narrow and particularistic regarding the fate of the nations. Ezra's initially broader concerns, which find voice at several points in the earlier dialogues, are silenced as a result of his own "transformation." Specifically, this can be seen in the author's ability to adopt and develop traditions that contain inclusive language, yet maintain a distinctly narrow interpretation of them. He does this both by simply avoiding the implications of such language and by recovering obscure traditions for alternative interpretations that better fit his overall perspective of election and salvation.

Second, while the narrowing tendency mentioned above can be seen to shape the trajectory of the document on a macro level, a similar pattern emerges in the way in which Ezra's revelatory dreams are explained. In both the fifth and sixth episodes, the interpretations given by the author invariably imply or state a narrower point of view than what the original visionary material may have allowed. Where the eagle vision had the whole world in referential view, the subsequent interpretation clearly narrowed the application to the faithful remnant in Israel.[212] In the vision of the man from the sea, the description of the peaceable multitude initially appears open to inclusive possibilities; however, the interpretation again radically narrows the field of reference to the remnant in the land. Thus the author himself appears to betray a personal perspective that is considerably narrower than the potential parameters of the traditional sources to which he is indebted.

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[212] Stone, *Commentary*, 405, points out the presence of the 'remnant' motif in previous eschatological descriptions of the messianic kingdom (5.41; 9.8; 12.34).

Those moments in the narrative where participants in the eschatological future appear to be described with inclusive language (6.25; 11.44-46; 13.11-13) may therefore be explained on two counts: (1) biblical traditions that inform these texts provide the author with potentially inclusive language, but his own appropriation of these traditions reflects a much narrower perspective – not surprising in light of the pessimistic theology throughout the document; and, (2) the literary context surrounding these moments qualifies this language in ways which confirm that a broadly inclusive interpretation does not reflect the intent of the author; his own rhetorical agenda overrides other considerations. Longenecker reflects that the "covenantal redefinition" whereby "the benefits of the covenant have been restricted to the ranks of exceptional people, and traditional notions such as atonement and divine mercy are practically vacuous" results in "a virtual absence of a robust theology of grace."[213]

3.5 The *Animal Apocalypse* (*1 Enoch* 85-90)[214]

3.5.1 Introduction

The *Animal Apocalypse*, an apocalyptic allegory recounting human history through the use of "zoomorphic" symbols,[215] reflects several distinct yet related layers of provenance. At the narrative level the claim is made that what we have here is the second of two pseudonymous visions attributed to a young Enoch (prior to marriage) in a presumably celibate state.[216] Historically, the author recasts this material as revelatory instruction allegedly given by Enoch in his old age to his son Methuselah (cf. 83.1; 85.1-2), thereby creating an impression of ancient prophetic activity (*ex eventu*) which anticipates the political and religious circumstances of his own day. This allegorical

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[213] Longenecker, *2 Esdras*, 98-100.

[214] The critical text consulted throughout is that of M.A. Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, with reference to the translations of E. Isaac, "1 Enoch"; George W. Nickelsburg and James C. Vanderkam, *1 Enoch: A New Translation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004); and, Matthew Black, *1 Enoch*.

[215] This term was coined by J.T. Milik, *Books of Enoch*, and has become a common adjective for this document.

[216] The implied benefits of celibacy for the reception of visionary material is noted by several scholars, see in particular Devorah Dimant, "The Biography of Enoch and the Books of Enoch," *VT* 33 (1983): 14-29; and, Patrick Tiller, *Commentary on the Animal Apocalypse* (SBLDS 4; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 231.

review of history spans time from the Adamic family through to the Maccabean revolts (ca. 165-163 B.C.E.) under Judas Maccabeus.[217]

By casting the activity of God, angels and humans throughout history as a linear, progressive movement toward an inevitable day of judgment, the author seeks to interpret current events in Palestine through the lens of biblical precedent. The result is that these current events are infused with cosmological significance and eschatological urgency in the author's communicative strategy. Within the context of this wider purpose, the development and appropriation of biblical traditions in *AA*, which address the eschatological fate of the Gentile nations, invites comparison with other early Jewish apocalyptic works already examined in this study.

In order to determine what function and fate the author ultimately assigns to the nations and to establish whether the narrative progression of *AA* suggests any movement or change in his own stance toward those nations, several stages of analysis will be undertaken. First, a summary of the vision as a whole with special attention to descriptions of the nations shall identify some underlying assumptions and perspectives of the author. Second, a critical reading of 90.16-38 sketches the range of roles attributed to the nations in the eschatological climax of the allegory. The culminating sequence of scenes of this vision not only features the Gentile nations prominently (90.19,30,33,37-38), but also seems to reveal a progressive movement from initially antagonistic depictions to increasingly positive portrayals of them. Finally, a synthesis of those features creatively adapted by this author will be weighed against those elements of biblical and post-biblical traditions that appear in the vision and are shared with other related early Jewish documents.

3.5.2 Narrative Development in the Animal Apocalypse

The narrative structure of *AA* traces human history by following the basic chronology represented by the traditions of the HB. Most of the symbols employed by the author have a recognizable counterpart in the "real" world. His strategy is to place each

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[217] While earlier commentators such as Dillman and Schürer attempted to date *AA* to the time of John Hyrcanus (late 2nd cent. B.C.E.), Charles' suggestion of identifying the sheep, which grew a "big horn" (90.9) with Judas Maccabeus has generally been accepted as correct. See Milik, *Books of Enoch*, 43-44; Tiller, *Commentary*, 8,16; G.W. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, chapters 1-36;81-108* (HermCS; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 360-362; and, Vanderkam, *Enoch*, 161-162.

referent in the vision into a symbolic category of lower value than that which it actually occupies in the created order (cosmos).[218] Hence, angelic beings are portrayed as men,[219] fallen angels as stars,[220] human beings take various animal forms (species determined by ethnic and ethical considerations), and even God is depicted in anthropomorphic terms.[221] Inanimate referents are also assigned lower (and less specific) categories – for instance, Jerusalem is a "house" (89.50a, 54a, 56, 66-67, 72; 90.28-29) and the Temple is a "tower" (89.50b, 54a, 56, 66-67, 73).[222] This symbolic adaptation of human history enables the author to render the interaction between the angelic and human worlds – most notably the Enochic Watcher tradition (86.1-6) – in more easily accessible terms. Further, the symbolic schema provides the author a rich background of traditions (biblical and otherwise) with which to depict the nations in their opposition to the people and plan of God. Most, if not all, of the species used in *AA* can be connected in two important ways to the Jewish scriptures: (1) by identifying how the author formulated his allegorical narrative based on the biblical version of Israel's history; and, (2) through recognition of the biblical traditions that provided precedent for the species used in this allegory.[223] These symbols frequently recall purity issues and polemic against antagonists in their related biblical traditions. Such representation of Gentile nations already suggests a great deal about the perspective with which this allegory will treat them.

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[218] Black, *1 Enoch*, 260.

[219] Also a select number of unusually righteous individuals attain the state of "man" upon their departure from life here on earth: Noah (89.1,9), Moses (89.36,38) – likely an indication of some type of angelic status (Tiller, *Commentary*, 40-41). Interestingly, the author is aware of the special circumstances surrounding Elijah's departure from the earth but does not finally depict him as a man (89.52).

[220] The author attributes to these "fallen stars" certain anthropomorphic features such as the ability to "pasture," to use "private parts," and to produce offspring (86.1,3-4) without assigning any human or animal symbol to them.

[221] Curiously, no direct mention is made of God until 89.14 where "the Lord" brings "the eleven sheep" (i.e. Joseph's brothers) to live "among the wolves" (i.e. in Egypt). Note that divine activity on behalf of the Israelites in slavery is described in 89.16-17 in terms of human action, "that Lord of the sheep *came down* at the call of the sheep from a high room, and came to them, and *looked* at them." In 89.50, "the Lord of the sheep" *stands* on the tower (i.e. temple).

[222] Although this identification has been disputed, cf. *1 En.* 90.28-29 (see below 3.5.3).

[223] Tiller, *Commentary*, 28-36, suggests three principles on which the inclusion of the animal species in the introductory list of "*wild animals*" (89.10) would have been based (1) they serve the purpose of the narrative in their reappearances later on; (2) each named species is either named explicitly in the lists of Levitically unclean animals (Lev 11; Deut 14) or implied by the general rules of uncleanness in those chapters; (3) the predatory/scavenger nature of most of the animals listed – and all of those that appear later in the allegory.

In the opening movement of this narrative drama (85.1-10) the first human family is assigned a "cattle" symbol (bulls and heifers), which denotes an Edenic condition that will be recreated in the eschatological future for all redeemed species (90.38). More specifically it is the white colour of the cattle, which indicates this condition since different colour values are assigned to Cain (black bull) and Abel (red bull – presumably in light of his violent death). A white bull (Seth) and many other black bulls (children) are born to the heifer (Eve) creating two distinct colour types of her offspring reflecting the two lines of descendants recalled in Genesis 4-5.[224] Throughout the visions, this symbol of white bull/cow is reserved for righteous humanity including such important figures as Noah (89.1), Noah's son (89.9), Abraham (89.10), Isaac (89.11), the redeemer figure of the eschaton (90.37), and finally, transformed Gentiles present in the eschatological future (90.38).

The next episode (86.1-6) retells the falling to earth of a first star and many other stars (fallen angels referred to as Watchers in the Enochic tradition) in order to intermingle sexually and genetically corrupt the black bulls and cows. This reflects the intense interest in 2T Judaism with the brief tradition of Genesis 6.1-4 as a possible explanation for the source of evil in the present age.[225] By forcing themselves sexually upon the female members of the heifer's black offspring, they create sub-species (elephants, camels and asses), which terrorize "*all the children of the earth*" (86.6).[226]

The resolution of the havoc wreaked on earth by the fallen angels (stars) – at least at a cosmological level – is the theme of two brief visionary episodes (87-88). In 87.1-4, Enoch is met by "white men" (good angelic beings) who take him to a high vantage point from which he is instructed to watch for the destruction of the fallen stars. Then in 88.1-3 Enoch observes the binding and casting into the abyss of these renegade angels. Following this expansion of a biblical tradition as a way of accounting for the presence of evil in the world, the author returns to the greater narrative of the Deluvian era. While the

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[224] On the symbolic possibilities of the animal's colors, see Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 371, and Tiller, *Commentary*, 225-226.

[225] Note also *Book of Watchers* (*1 En.* 6-36); *Jub.* 5-10; and, *Similitudes* (*1 En.* 53-56).

[226] Tiller, *Commentary*, 83-96, provides a detailed analysis of which Watcher traditions may have influenced *AA* at this point. He recognizes continuity with existing traditions as well as certain creative adjustments in the details of the text. Particularly important for the present study is Tiller's observation that the author of *AA* has a different view of human responsibility for evil and violence in the world (*Commentary*, 88).

action of the white men initiated cosmic justice, the earth continues to be the scene of chaos and destruction as a result of the invasion by the fallen stars.

As the largest segment of the visionary material, 89.1-90.15 recollects human history from the days of Noah to the period of the Seleucid dynasty (2nd cent. B.C.E.). At this juncture in his historical review the author incorporates pejorative species labels to distinguish Gentiles from the chosen people of God. Following the destruction of all the black cattle and their terrifying offspring in the Deluge, Noah, represented as a "white bull" who becomes a "man" (angelic status), emerges and is said to have three offspring – each of them bulls: one white, one red, and one black (89.9).[227] Until this point in the narrative, the author has depicted those people groups he deems to be either morally or ethnically inferior with a colour motif (black). With his retelling of the generations from Noah to Abram, however, he introduces what becomes his dominant symbolic value for Gentiles, "*wild animals and birds*" (89.10).[228] Within this larger rubric of untamed and unclean animals, it appears that the author has, for the most part, specific nations and people groups in mind. In sharp contrast to the overwhelming swarm of such adversarial animal species, each of the generations (or layers) of offspring also introduces a small but significant redemptive character: Noah's descendants include Abram (89.10: a white bull); Abraham's descendants include Isaac (89.11: a white bull).

In each respective appearance of a new generation of (mostly) wild animals and one white bull, the narrative expresses a negative view of the Gentiles beyond the connotations of their species labels. First, these wild animals and birds are described as dominant by virtue of their sheer number, a point the author makes beyond the basic distinction between plural and singular. In doing so, the author affirms the common view

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[227] Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 376, notes the reverse order in which the three colored bulls (Noah's sons) appear in contrast to the three sons of Adam (85.3,8). He posits that the colors represent a white Sethite line (through Shem), a red line for the peoples of Canaan and their bloody fate (through Ham), and a black line for the gloom of the people from the north (through Japheth). Black, *1 Enoch*, 264, makes a similar suggestion but both appear to move beyond what the text admits. Tiller, *Commentary*, 267-268, has shown that if "red" and "black" were intended to indicate specific value judgments on Ham and Japheth they do not match the fixed order of the tradition (Gen 6.10; 7.13). He rightly suggests "...it may be that the colors here do not represent any specific characteristics of the three brothers but that taken together they serve to characterize the postdiluvian age as essentially the same as the antediluvian age – inhabited by both righteous and wicked, both perpetrators and victims of evil."

[228] Tiller, *Commentary*, 271, points out the strong possibility that Ezek 39.17-18 informs the imagery of this moment in the narrative. There is, however, a twist in the use of this imagery; in Ezek the animals are fattened to be slaughtered, while in *AA* they are predators and scavengers.

in biblical traditions of Israel's struggle with surrounding nations.[229] Second, both by implication and explicit mention, the author asserts the basically violent disposition of these wild species of animals and birds. Not only are the people of God undermined by the threat of their own weaker numbers, they do so in the face of the overtly hostile intentions of the Gentile nations.[230] These two forms of oppression are the starting point for the conditions in which the nation of Israel is born and seeks to prosper.

At this point in the narrative, the author switches the animal label for the people of God, beginning with Jacob, from "white" cattle to "white" sheep (89.12).[231] The introduction of this symbol reflects a major motif in biblical traditions depicting Israel as God's sheep.[232] Again, the Esau symbol in this generation of Isaac's offspring carries several hallmarks of the author's allegorical strategy: wild boar (untamed and unclean), black (negative moral judgment by colour), numerous ("*begat many boars*"). In a brief description of the Joseph narratives (89.13) the stage is set by the author for an extended rehearsal (89.14-27) of the biblical Exodus tradition regarding Israel's slavery in Egypt (here called "wolves") and subsequent deliverance. Although for the first time in this larger story the author acknowledges the rise of Israel's numeric strength (89.14 "*and they increased and became many flocks of sheep*"), he emphasizes their plight and the increasingly oppressive intimidation and eventual infanticide by the "wolves" (89.15).[233] This depiction of the wolves' aggression finds full expression in the recounting of Moses and Aaron's entreaties to Pharaoh (89.16-19). The author's extended retelling of the escape from Egypt and the subsequent drowning of Pharaoh's army reveals something of his own interest in graphically portraying their demise (89.20-27). At no point is any

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[229] Collins, *Apocalypticism*, 91-93, cites as particular examples Ps 2; Ezek 38-39; Dan 11; Joel 3.
[230] Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 377, states: "Thus the author produces here the antagonists in the central drama in the Vision: the struggle between Israel and the Gentiles who prey on them, disperse them, and destroy them."
[231] Tiller, *Commentary*, 274-275.
[232] A classic statement of this motif reflecting a similarly antagonistic setting is Jer 50.17 (LXX 27.27): "Israel is a hunted sheep driven away by lions. First the king of Assyria devoured it, and now at the end King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon has gnawed its bones" (cf. Num 27.17; Ps 44.8-23 [LXX 43.8-23]; 74.1 [73.1]; 78.52 [77.52]; 79.13 [78.13]; Jer 23.1-2; Ezek 34.1-31; Mic 2.12).
[233] Tiller, *Commentary*, 280, "This replication of the cry of the sheep in *AA* shows that this may have been an important feature in the thinking of the circle that produced the *Anim. Apoc.*" Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 379, notes that Israel's cry and complaint, while absent in biblical traditions, is common in Enochic material.

redeeming quality granted to the wolves by the author.[234] By the time the author arrives at the wilderness wanderings of Israel (89.28-41) he has firmly established a paradigm with which to account for the actions of the Gentile peoples and nations in relation to Israel.

References to antagonistic people groups re-emerge as the narrative turns to the later days of Samuel the prophet and the dawning of the monarchy in Israel. "*Wild animals*" reappear in the narrative and the author introduces a new symbol to signify the king/ruler referent – the "ram" (89.42).[235] The author frames the political landscape of Israel's emerging monarchy in terms associated with the oppression of Israel by its Gentile neighbours (89.42) including three specific species labels: dogs (Philistines), foxes (Ammonites and Moabites), and wild boars (Edomites).[236] In both the reigns of Saul (89.42-47) and Solomon (89.48b-50) Gentile nations are depicted as aggressively antagonizing Israel and yet completely defeated (89.43 "*that ram [Saul] began to butt those dogs and foxes and wild-boars...until it had destroyed them all*"; 89.49 "*that ram [Solomon] butted and killed all the animals, and those animals did not again prevail amongst the sheep*"). Apart from the rhetorical effect invoked by these vignettes of Israelite military superiority, the depiction of the Gentiles as aggressors remains consistently negative.

As he recounts Israel's rejection of the prophets (89.51-58), which ultimately leads to their captivity and destruction, the author lays responsibility for this demise in three camps. First, it is Israel's own faithlessness ("*they went astray, and walked in many ways...and their eyes were blinded*") that seals their fate (89.51,54).[237] Second, God's response to such faithlessness is to initiate the process of inevitable divine judgment both in terms of internal chaos and external oppression (89.54). Finally, the "*wild animals*" (Gentile nations) are seen to attack the sheep with the full knowledge and agreement of

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[234] It seems as though any positive elements of Egyptian – Israelite relations are simply ignored by the author. This may reflect the literary limitations of his project or, more likely, serves his overall narrative purpose best.

[235] This 'ram' symbol indicates political leadership and anticipates the figure of Judas Maccabeus in the struggle for autonomy by the Jewish people in Palestine at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (90.9-16); see Tiller, *Commentary*, 306, and Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 383-384.

[236] Regarding these identifications of nations with animal symbols, see Tiller, *Commentary*, 32-36, who also points out the apparent omission of Aram in spite of its hostilities toward Israel during the Davidic era (35-36,306).

[237] Both Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 385, and Tiller, *Commentary*, 318, suggest the common dual images of "straying" and "blindness" for apostasy. Tiller further observes the presence of the "blindness" motif in every period of Israelite history in the narrative.

the Lord of the sheep (89.55-58).[238] Several verbal ideas employed here ("*tear to pieces, devour, swallow up, carried off*") serve the two-fold purpose of graphically portraying the deserved punishment of Israel and rehearsing the violent character of the opportunistic Gentile nations. Enoch's indignation and plea for mercy on Israel's behalf go unheeded by the Lord of the sheep as the nations run roughshod over Israel.[239]

The time of Israel's exile and the entire post-exilic period up to the author's present day (ca. 164-160 B.C.E.) are viewed as a single era (characterized by the motif of the oversight of the "*seventy shepherds*"),[240] albeit with several distinguishable periods (89.59-90.15). Here the author exhibits narrative creativity while employing the common apocalyptic device of 'periodization of history' to recount Israel's exilic and post-exilic struggles (2TP).[241] A significant portion of the narrative relates God's instructions to the seventy shepherds and his repeated warnings that their own oversight of the sheep will be subject to his scrutiny and judgment (89.59-64). Implied and anticipated in this instruction is the suggestion that these shepherds indeed overstepped their authority and allowed much greater devastation and ravaging of the sheep than even God's judgment called for (89.65-71). Here, while the nations are directly involved in the oppression of Israel, they are largely subject to the oversight of the deficient shepherds and therefore guilty by association.[242]

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[238] Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 385, draws various parallels to biblical accounts of military campaigns against Israel based on the various animal identities here in the text.

[239] Tiller, *Commentary*, 322-323, suggests that with regard to Israel's past the author here accepts a traditional Jewish attitude that such political misfortunes were proper consequences of disobedience to God (i.e. Deut, 1&2 Sam, 1&2 Kgs, Jer). This, however, will not be his position regarding his own present-day circumstances later in chapter 90.

[240] The identity of the seventy shepherds in *AA* has long caused commentators difficulty. Most attempts at identification fall into one of two categories: (1) that they are a cryptic reference to the various kings and rulers of this extended period of time; or, (2) that they represent angelic beings charged with the oversight of the sheep (i.e. presumably with control over human rulers and earthly events as they relate to the well being of Israel). See the excursus on the shepherds in Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 390-393, who argues convincingly for their angelic character. He suggests that the conceptual background is to be found in the merging of two traditions (Ezek 34 and Zech 11).

[241] James Vanderkam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition* (CBQMS 16; Washington: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1984), 153-158. He suggests that the propensity among early Jewish apocalyptists to "periodization" of history (usually based on heptads of years or "weeks") was likely based on symbolic interpretations of Jeremiah's prophecy that the Judean exile would last seventy years (Jer 25.11-12; 29.10). See also the recapitulation of this tradition in 2 Chron 36.20-21 (cf. Lev 26.34-35) with respect to Sabbath recovery, and the parallel in Zech 1.12-17 related to the time that the Temple lay in ruins. Most common among these apocalyptic schemes of periodization is Daniel's vision of the seventy weeks (Dan 9.2,24-27).

[242] Tiller, *Commentary*, 334-335.

Problems associated with the project of rebuilding Jerusalem and the Temple (89.72-77 led by "three sheep")[243] are attributed to the interference of the "wild boars" (Edomites).[244] While unquestionably one more example of the hostility of Gentiles towards Israel, the author's chief concern here rests less with Gentile hostility and much more deeply with the blindness of "the sheep" and the impurity of the cult associated with the Temple (89.73-74). The result of this ongoing unfaithfulness of the sheep is their further destruction and scattering among the nations (89.75: "*all the sheep were scattered and mixed with them [wild animals], and they [the shepherds] did not save them from the hand of the animals*").[245]

In the opening verses of *1 Enoch* 90 the author intensifies the history of oppression (90.2-5) during the period of Ptolemaic rule. He describes a mob mentality on the part of the nations that leads to the grotesque dismemberment (90.2-3 "*they began...to dig out their eyes and to devour their flesh*") and significant depletion of "the sheep" (90.4 "*the sheep were few*"). This characterization of the Gentile nations continues in the subsequent period of Seleucid control (90.6-12). Within this context of intense oppression, a minority group of devout, discerning Jews (90.6 "*lambs were born...and they began to open their eyes*")[246] attempts to sound the alarm and offer resistance but is met with both ruthless external suppression and internal persecution.[247] The culmination of this negative presentation of the Gentile nations comes in the descriptions of the battle of Beth-zur (90.13-15)[248] and merges with the initial stages of the eschatological future

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[243] Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 394, speculates that based on the tradition of *1 Esdras* the three must be Joshua, Zerubbabel and Sheshbazzar. Tiller, *Commentary*, 338-339, argues that the number "three" is a corruption of "two" in the Ethiopic manuscripts, thus the identification should simply be Joshua and Zerubbabel.

[244] Tiller, *Commentary*, 339-340; Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 394.

[245] Tiller, *Commentary*, 341, cites this as proof that for many Jews the exile did not end with the return to Israel by the people.

[246] While the character of this physically marginalized but spiritually discerning sect or group may resemble known resistance groups within Palestine in the 2nd cent. B.C.E. (Qumran, Essenes, Zealots, etc.), positive identification of this group lies beyond the scope of the text as it stands. The majority of commentators, however, confidently identify the author (and the community he represented) with these "lambs" in 90.6-9. On this see Tiller, *Commentary*, 102-116,350.

[247] The reading in 90.7, "And they afflicted them..." is made difficult by several corrupt manuscripts and the choice of verb either renders the small group of 'lambs' as the persecutors (*'asrexewwomu*) or the persecuted (*yasarrexewwomu*). Here I follow Tiller, *Commentary*, 351-352 who opts for the latter, passive reading.

[248] Milik (*Books of Enoch*, 43-44) is responsible for the general identification of 90.13-15 with the role of Judas Maccabeus at the battle of Beth-zur (165 B.C.E.). He based his conclusion largely upon the similarities between this military account and that recorded in 2 Macc 11.6-12.

(90.16-19).[249] Here the nations gather for war against the faithful remnant in Israel and meet an angelic warrior/messenger who initiates their defeat and empowers the faithful sheep to successfully put them to flight (90.15,18). The Gentile nations are annihilated by means of a cosmic earthquake (90.18 "*...and the earth was torn apart, and all the beasts and all the birds of heaven fell [away] from those sheep and sank in the earth, and it covered over them*"). This judgment is divine in character: the Lord of the sheep enacts it. Tellingly, however, the author further underscores the destruction of these oppressors with a moment of pure revenge. He includes a vignette in which the sheep are given "a big sword" in order to kill the wild animals – surely a vision driven by desire for vindication (90.19).[250] Nickelsburg sees a parallel here with a passage in the *Apocalypse of Weeks* (*1 Enoch* 91.11-12) where a sword is given to the righteous and "*the sinners will be handed over into the hands of the righteous.*" He concludes "the present text appears to envision the participation of the righteous in militant judgmental action against a broader contingent of the Gentiles than those with whom they had been in immediate conflict."[251] This synergistic participation of the faithful in the final defeat of their opponents suggests a 'militaristic ideology' in *AA*.[252]

Based on Tiller's reconstruction of the various 'periods' of Israel's post-exilic history under the angelic shepherds, one may observe that in each period the Gentile nations are either directly or indirectly responsible for oppression and injustice against Israel. At no point is there any hint that either positive behaviour toward Israel or recognition of their God is attributed to the Gentile nations. Significantly, even in the descriptions of the reign of Solomon and at the conclusion of the Babylonian captivity, the perspective of the author on Gentile involvement is entirely negative and couched in

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[249] Significant textual uncertainty exists vis-à-vis the unity of 90.13-18 in light of the significant parallels found in the two accounts of military battles with divine intervention it contains. The suggestion has often been made that 90.13-15 and 90.16-18 are so similar that some form of redaction must be responsible for such close repetition. Tiller's review of the options includes a suggestion that 90.16-18 represents an original version of an eschatological battle with divine intervention on which the account of the battle of Beth-zur (90.13-15) is then modelled and included (*Commentary*, 361-362).

[250] Tiller, *Commentary*, 365-366, notes the parallel in 2 Macc 15.15-16 where the gift of a sword is given to Judas Maccabeus in a vision and suggests that *1 En.* 90.19 "represents the second stage of classical battles in which there is an initial victory on the battlefield, followed by successful pursuit and slaughter with fleeing forces."

[251] Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 401.

[252] Gordon Zerbe, "Pacifism and Passive Resistance in Apocalyptic Writings: A Critical Evaluation" in *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation* (Charlesworth & Evans, eds.; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 93-94.

the standard pejorative symbolism of his allegory. Due to the fact that the traditions preserved in the HB regarding these eras in Israel's history reflect some positive perspectives toward Gentiles, the 'memory' and point of view of the author of *AA* are decidedly more pessimistic. These progressively darker images of the function and fate of the Gentile nations leave the reader quite unprepared for what follows in the author's visualization of the eschatological future.

3.5.3 The Role of the Gentile Nations in *1 Enoch* 90.16-38

The way both the judgment and final destiny of the Gentile nations are conceived as *AA* moves toward its eschatological climax is surprisingly neither static nor entirely consistent. In light of the uniformity of 'anti-Gentile' rhetoric in the allegory up to this point, the reader finds an unexpected evolution in the author's perspective in the concluding scenes of the vision. Central to the author's interpretation of biblical traditions in this final sequence is his ability to incorporate and hold a broad range of diverse perspectives in tension. One finds such a broad spectrum of ways in which the Gentile nations are depicted so as to suggest that the author was capable of employing and merging the entire range of traditions regarding the nations available to him.[253] On the one hand, these include explicitly antagonistic portrayals of the Gentiles in the ancient past and the author's present that he justifies by their deserved punishment and destruction. On the other hand, the vision also contains images of virtually unqualified acceptance of Gentiles in the idealized future. Between these two poles a mediating view of Gentiles in a subservient role is also included. This developing perspective may be illustrated by a summary of key moments in the author's vision of the future age (90.16-38), which deal expressly with the Gentile nations.

The scenes that follow the apparently decisive defeat of the rogue nations (90.16-19) further portray definitive punishment upon all those who acted in an antagonistic manner toward the created order and "the sheep." Those implicated in one way or another as subverting God's activity among humans generally, and with Israel in particular, include: the fallen angels (Watchers) from antiquity ("stars": 90.24; cf. Gen 6.1-4; *1 En.* 6-11; 17-19; 21; 54.4-55.4); the angelic supervisors of Israel and the nations who

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[253] Interestingly, while a number of scholars have suggested the presence of either interpolations or redaction to explain apparent chronological difficulties or literary discrepancies, no suggestion of differing source has ever been made to explain the presence of such divergent traditions within the same document.

permitted excessive abuse and oppression of Israel ("shepherds": 90.22-23,25); and the remaining inhabitants of Israel who either assimilated to hellenizing forces or actively opposed the remnant "lambs" in 90.6-7 ("blind sheep": 90.26-27). Each of these judgment scenes is part of the author's conceptualization of the vindicating justice of God, which inaugurates the messianic age. They confirm the previously noted movement of the nations from a consistent adversarial position within history to their inevitable eschatological punishment in the category of final and complete judgment.[254]

Against this backdrop of judgment the reader is then taken to the ultimate concern of the author – the building of the final state of eschatological blessing and rest here called the "new house" (referred to in other apocalyptic writings as "Zion" or the "New Jerusalem"; cf. Tob 13.11-17 [esp.16-17]; 4 Ezra 10.25-27,40-54; 5Q15; 11Q18 [11QNJar]; Rev 21.9-22.5).[255] Here the author again employs the muted language characteristic of his allegory: "*...he folded up that old house...the Lord of the sheep brought a new house, larger and higher than the first one, and he set it up on the site of the first one which had been folded up...*" (90.28-29). It is perhaps noteworthy that, in light of the author's cautious and often pessimistic treatment of the Temple in its post-exilic state, this vision of the "new house" does not include the explicit mention of a "new tower" (i.e. Temple).[256] While locating this "new house" geographically in Israel, the author unexpectedly includes Gentiles within the milieu of this newly formed eschatological capital: "*And I saw...all the animals on the earth and all the birds of heaven falling down and worshipping those sheep, and entreating them and obeying them in every command*" (90.30). Not only does this appear to contradict the general tone of

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[254] Tiller, *Commentary*, 368, argues that the author's construction of this final judgment scene is entirely "conventional" – the judgment of the fallen angels and shepherds modeled after Enochic traditions and the judgment of the sheep showing some dependence upon "traditional Jewish views on the final judgment going back to the Book of Jeremiah."

[255] Humphrey, *The Ladies*, 73-76; Tiller, *Commentary*, 45-47.

[256] L.T. Stuckenbruck, "Reading the Present in the *Animal Apocalypse*" (forthcoming, 2005) reads 90.29 as an intentional contrast to the critique of the 2T in 89.72-73, thus implying the renewal of cult and Temple. The symbols "table" and "bread" have obvious reference to the cult and appear in the descriptions of the first and second temples (89.50,72-73) but have no direct parallel in 90.29-30. In my view, however, the mention in 90.30 of new and larger "ornaments" in the New Jerusalem suggests cultic implements. Ultimately, to suggest that *AA* does not envision a Temple in the eschatological dwelling of the righteous is an unsustainable argument from silence (*contra* Tiller, *Commentary*, 45-51,376, who cites Rev 21.22 as "the closest parallel"), and perhaps even misses the author's cryptic symbolism. One may certainly suggest, however, that coupled with his rejection of the 2nd Temple as impure, a reconstituted physical Temple in the eschaton is not a thematic priority for the author.

the entire apocalypse to this point; in fact, the nations were depicted in 90.18-19 as utterly obliterated. While it is tempting to speculate that whom the author must have in mind are those Gentiles who did not oppress Israel and thus escaped judgment,[257] the textual evidence does not support such a precise reading. The earlier language of 90.19 is (intentionally?) vague – what is meant by the description "*...all the animals and birds of heaven fled before them* [faithful Israel]" remains unclear.[258] This situation is not helped by the fact that the author uses no qualifying language in 90.30 for the reappearance of Gentiles in the narrative.

Two important features of these Gentiles' presence in the eschatological "new house" are immediately apparent: first, the actions attributed to them (worship, supplication, and obedience) determine their status and function in relation to the sheep as subordinate and subservient; and second, the object of their activity is not God (as one might expect) but rather, "the sheep" themselves. Conspicuous by its absence is any hint that these Gentiles worship, serve and obey "the Lord of the sheep." While one might assume that this is ultimately the point of such a portrayal of the Gentiles, the inclusion of this tradition nevertheless serves to highlight that vindication of the righteous remnant played a central role in the author's view of the future.[259] Biblical traditions, which depict the deferent worship of Israel by the Gentile nations in the eschatological future, are often assumed to underlie this type of eschatological scenario (cf. Zech 14.16; Dan 7.27). There is, however, an important difference in the scenario envisioned in 90.30. The fact that the "sheep" (i.e. faithful remnant), and not Israel's God, are named as the object of worship and obedient servitude reflects a distinctive Isaianic motif of future vindication for faithful Israel (cf. Isa 49.23; 60.14). The result of this significant shift in the emphasis of the text is further evidence that the author's primary interest in the appropriation of these traditions is vindication for those whom he considers members of faithful community.

While the description of subservient Gentiles in 90.30 appears to contradict the earlier scene of their destruction (90.19), neither destruction nor subservience reflects the

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[257] So Tiller, *Commentary*, 377.

[258] As noted earlier, this text is concerned primarily with the issue of vindication – especially so in light of the repeated battle account in 90.13-15 and 90.16-18.

[259] Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 405, observes, "The situation that has prevailed throughout the main part of the Vision is now reversed."

author's final word on the matter. The turning point of the eschatological narrative – at least insofar as the Gentiles are concerned – occurs in 90.33 with the sudden pronouncement that "*...all those which had been destroyed and scattered and all the wild animals and the birds of heaven gathered together in that house, and the Lord of the sheep rejoiced very much because they were all good and had returned to his house.*" Two surprising developments must be taken into account: The reappearance of those who had earlier been destroyed. This is either a reference to the blinded sheep previously judged in 90.26-27 with fire (the more likely option with the verb "returned" at the end of 90.33), or possibly (but less likely) the Gentile nations that were consumed by the earth and then "fled" in the face of the judgment (90.18-19).[260] Moreover, the Gentiles are included in the declaration of "all" as "good" in a completely unqualified manner. Here we learn that the author did, in fact, envision the re-instatement of previously judged Gentile nations. Now, however; the emphasis appears to move toward an egalitarian treatment of Jew and Gentile. These conceptual 'moves' produce further readjustment of our understanding of the author's perspective on Gentile participation in the eschaton.[261] With increased status and dignity, they are now part of the restored order and they too, are objects of God's desire and joy.

Narrative development of the motif of Gentile inclusion in God's final restoration in *1 Enoch* 90 finds its fullest expression in the final scene of the "new house" in 90.37-38. The appearance of an authoritative figure (90.37 "*a white bull was born and its horns were big*") is based on the pre-fall Adam in 85.1-3.[262] The author appears to fuse traditions which demand subservience of the nations (90.37 "*all the wild animals and all the birds of heaven were afraid of it and entreated it continually*") with traditions which affirm their eventual equal standing with Israel (90.38 "*And I looked until all the species*

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[260] This second option is less likely not only on grammatical grounds (the presence of a conjunction), but also in light of the fact that the Gentiles are explicitly mentioned in what follows. If this second option could be sustained, it might reveal the author's recognition of the dissonance between previous Gentile destruction and subsequent restoration and his attempt to address that incongruity.

[261] Dillmann, *Das Buch Henoch: Übersetzt und erklärt* (Leipzig: Vogel, 1853), 286, noted the adjustment in 90.33 of the author's perspective of Gentile inclusion from 90.30.

[262] Milik, *The Books of Enoch*, 45, suggests the identification of the white bull as a "second Adam". Tiller, however, suggests that the typology of the apocalypse may actually contrast this white bull with both Adam and Noah, thus being more accurately a "third Adam" (*Commentary*, 17-20,384).

were transformed, and they all became white bulls...and the Lord of the sheep rejoiced over them and over all the bulls").

In the final analysis the author reveals that his hope rests in nothing short of complete re-creation – a vision of "the ideal future, which corresponds to the primordial past."[263] By maintaining symbolic continuity with the earliest moments of the vision, a perspective of *Endzeit als Urzeit* is affirmed. This is not simply a reconstituting of Israel but a salvific transformation of the entire human race. As Tiller notes, the return to Edenic conditions is anthropological and not geographic – Jerusalem is the locus of this transformed order of creation.[264] It is with this climactic and unexpected turn of events that the vision concludes and Enoch is roused from his sleep.

Although the (re)-appearance of the Gentiles in Israel's eschatological future is interesting, perhaps even more significant is the gradated (incremental) positive perspective, which we have traced through the developing narrative trajectory of *1 Enoch* 90.16-38. One may argue based on the preceding analysis that the narrative movement of the final scenes of this vision regarding the fate of the nations logically (in the mind of the author) progresses: from destruction (90.19), to subservient homage (90.30), to affirmation signalled by a common resurrection (90.33), to full equality with faithful Israel based on a radical transformation of all species (90.38). Such evolving narrative movement, while unexpected from the reader's perspective, does not appear to be either haphazard or unaware of the inherent logical tensions it creates.

3.5.4 Summary

Several important observations may be made with respect to *how* the author of *AA* understood the function and fate of the Gentile nations to play out in the eschatological future. First, the author regards the Gentiles as culpable for oppression in Israel's historic past and narrative present. This leaves them worthy of divine judgment (90.18) and human (Israel's) retribution (90.19). Second, it is also clear from the way in which the vision concludes with "all species" of animals being returned to an Edenic state (white bulls) that the author operates with a restorationist or 're-creationist' perspective of the

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[263] Tiller, *Commentary*, 383.
[264] Tiller, *Commentary*, 388.

final eschatological landscape. That such a perspective informs his narrative throughout may help to explain how he is able to fuse and incorporate differing traditions regarding the fate of the nations into his overall vision.

AA represents the most negative presentation of the Gentile nations of any of the documents surveyed in this chapter. Simultaneously it offers the most broadly inclusive vision of Gentile participation in the eschatological future. The question of *what* the author intended this unexpected conclusion to accomplish in terms of its motivational impact is also worth considering. There are hints within the document of the author's dissatisfaction with mainstream Judaism.[265] One may speculate that such a final turn of events is intended as a critique of current religious practices in Israel and the syncretism among certain groups in Judaism with Hellenistic culture and politics. Thus the author may seek to direct the attention of his audience to a final reality in which the primordial (hence biblical) paradigm of existence is universally reaffirmed.

3.6 Synthesis and Summary

At the conclusion of this evaluation of apocalyptic thought from the 2TP, several observations prepare us for a similar evaluation of the book of Revelation. The following interpretive strategies and patterns regarding the fate of earth's peoples have been identified in these documents. (1) *Vindication*: Gentile participation in the future age was frequently employed as a form of vindication in several ways: as positive (though qualified) response to God (4 Ezra 6.25-28; *1 En.* 50; 90.30,33); in scenes of God's judgment over the nations (4 Ezra 13.5-11; *1 En.* 48.4-5,8-10; 62-63; 90.18-19); in descriptions of the restoration of Israel and Jerusalem (Tob 13.11-17; 4 Ezra 10.27,39-56; *1 En.* 90.28-29,33); and, through Gentile acknowledgment of the supremacy of Israel's faith (*1 En.* 62-63; 90.30; Tob 14.5-6). (2) *Narrative Development*: Each document presented some form of narrative movement discernible *particularly* regarding the final fate of the nations. In Tobit, we found remarkable development from nationalistic to universal categories in the main character's outlook. The *Similitudes* demonstrates dramatic change in the attitude of the earth's powerful people toward Israel's God (*1 En.* 62.6,9; 63.1-4) – yet without future hope (*1 Enoch* 62.4-5,10-11; 63.6-9). Most striking is

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[265] L.T. Stuckenbruck, "Reading the Present."

the gradated narrative movement in the *Animal Apocalypse* from judgment and condemnation of the nations to unqualified acceptance and participation in the future age (*1 En.* 90.16-19,30,33,37-38). However, the opposite is true in 4 Ezra where transformation in the main character (4 Ezra 9-10) results in a more negative view of the fate of the nations. (3) *Literary Qualifiers*: These documents incorporated literary signals and theologically delimiting language into visions of universal participation in the future age. This was most apparent where the language of 'mercy' left a degree of uncertainty (Tob 13; *1 En.* 50), or where the universal terms of a dream were significantly narrowed in its corresponding interpretation (4 Ezra 11-12; 13). (4) *Use of "Stock" Idioms and Epithets*: Common use of designations such as "the inhabitants of the earth," and "the kings of the earth," suggests that these authors viewed humanity as predominantly antagonistic toward God and the faithful communities. While each document demonstrated individual features, these four categories provide a background for an evaluation of universal language in Revelation.

CHAPTER FOUR:

Preliminary Matters in the Book of Revelation

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the perspectives of four early Jewish documents regarding the eschatological fate of the Gentile nations were evaluated. These documents – Tobit, the *Similitudes of Enoch*, 4 Ezra, and the *Animal Apocalypse* – show differing degrees of an internal narrative tension on this issue. Both particularistic (even "anti-Gentile") statements regarding the future age and moments of more broadly universal language are present. Attention was given to how these documents employ and appropriate biblical traditions that envision eschatological Gentile participation (i.e. subservience, conversion); how the presence of those traditions shaped the overall narrative trajectory of each respective document; and, whether or not progression, development, or change in perspective may be detected in a given document. Each document was taken seriously in its own right both in terms of its outside literary influences and internal narrative shape (symbolic universe). The results suggest that despite their numerous dissimilarities and unique emphases, there nevertheless exists a common tendency among these documents with respect to how they employed universalizing biblical traditions. It appears that these authors framed and qualified biblical traditions in ways that predetermined their function predominantly as the language of vindication and hope for the faithful community.

The driving question behind the analysis of Chapter 3 has been to provide a contextual matrix within which to locate the narrative tension in the Apocalypse of John on the issue of the eschatological fate of the nations. This tension, described in Chapter 1, may be understood in one of two divergent directions: Either it represents common apocalyptic convention thereby placing Revelation in continuity with the documents evaluated in Chapter 3; or, John operates uniquely apart from this complex of eschatological expectation in early Judaism – a premise which would carry the burden of proof. One need not expect unanimity among these varied voices of apocalyptic thought; however, their appropriation of biblical traditions regarding the eschatological fate of the Gentile nations provides a background against which the communicative strategy of Revelation is better understood. Further, the sequential literary-narrative reading applied

to these documents in Chapter 3 provides a sustainable methodological framework with which to engage Revelation.

The focus, then, of this chapter is John's Apocalypse. Prior to a detailed evaluation of the textual evidence (Chapter 5), several preliminary issues are addressed as they relate specifically to the concerns of this study. To begin, a critical evaluation of Richard Bauckham's thesis "The Conversion of the Nations"[1] suggests several points at which his conclusions are unconvincing on textual and logical grounds, as well as raising questions, which his proposal leaves unanswered. Further, in spite of a large volume of literature devoted to the questions of Revelation's genre and literary structure, these issues shall briefly be examined. Finally, the literary-narrative method applied in the previous chapter to relevant documents from early Judaism is used to provide the framework for an inquiry into the narrative trajectory of the overall argument of Revelation. These preliminary discussions help articulate the working assumptions that shape Chapter 5's analysis of the narrative tension in the Apocalypse of John created by universal language and traditions.

4.2 Critique of Bauckham's Thesis

The earlier history of research in Chapter 2 suggested that Richard Bauckham's positive thesis regarding the fate of the nations was both innovative[2] and relatively unchallenged.[3] While an overview of his argument has already been provided (2.5) several significant difficulties demand further inquiry. At least four weaknesses of Bauckham's method, which seem to undermine his conclusions, may be summarized here: (1) An overstated emphasis upon the intentionality of John with respect to a variety of compositional features (exegesis of OT texts, numerical significance of word repetition, use of images and metaphors) seems to press an otherwise valid observation to

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[1] Bauckham, *Climax*, 238-337.

[2] While he owes some conceptual debt to the work of G. Caird, *Revelation*, and Mattias Rissi, [*The Future of the World: An Exegetical Study of Revelation 19.11-22.5*, (SBT 2/23; London: SCM, 1972)], Bauckham presents the most detailed exegetical argument for this positive reading from a wider selection of texts in Revelation.

[3] Most recently, however, several critiques of portions of his proposal have been offered. See Dave Matthewson, "The Destiny of the Nations in Revelation 21.1-22.5," *TynBul* 53.1 (2002): 121-142; E. Schnabel, "John and the Future of the Nations," *BBR* 12.2 (2002): 243-271; and, M. Jauhiainen, "ΑΠΟΚΑΛΥΨΙΣ ΙΗΣΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ (Rev.1:1): The Climax of John's Prophecy?" *TynBul* 54.1 (2003): 99-115.

unrealistic limits. (2) His conclusions regarding the structure of Revelation not only pose grammatical and narrative difficulties; they also appear to contradict his own earlier structural observations. (3) Bauckham's reading does not take into account the theological and psychological (motivational) tensions it implies for the community of believers – an issue difficult to infer from the text itself. Finally, (4) given the influence of the OT upon the use of images and motifs, as well as the literary composition itself, it seems that Bauckham has not given due attention to the role which developing biblical traditions in early Jewish apocalyptic thought may have played in shaping John's appropriation of those traditions.

Throughout his discussion of a variety of topics related to the text of Revelation, Bauckham insists not only on the unity and literary coherence of the text,[4] but in fact argues that even the slightest compositional nuances (as he finds them) are the intentional work of John. At one point he goes so far as to suggest that John has hidden certain patterns beneath the surface of the text, "which only assiduous study could be expected to uncover."[5] What he suggests by this is that in every case, these compositional features have both specific literary function and corresponding theological significance. Four observations undermine such a rote or mechanical view of authorial intention. First, John purports to have received the visions while "in the Spirit" (1.9; 4.2; 17.3; 21.10). Second, the intended audience initially only had oral access to these visions in a community setting, thus rendering "assiduous study" by its modern definition unrealistic. Third, in light of the author's obvious familiarity not only with the OT but also with developing biblical traditions, one expects that "stock phrases," images and motifs might appear simply because they are at the author's disposal and not because every word was intentionally exegeted.[6] Finally, at certain points in his description of John's exegetical technique, Bauckham arbitrarily imposes criteria for exegetical method in order to

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[4] Against this see Aune's comments (*Revelation*, xc-xciii).
[5] Bauckham, *Climax*, 2. Throughout his discussion Bauckham describes the OT exegesis of the author of Revelation as "expert," "meticulous," "subtle," and "deliberate" (see esp. 240-241,297,326).
[6] This observation will figure prominently in the discussion of how certain labels used by the author for the various groups he envisions, are to be identified within the contexts of each specific vision.

explain how some traditional material is transformed (discontinuity) while other material maintains contextual continuity.[7]

The volume in which Bauckham's thesis regarding the conversion of the nations appears opens with a treatment of the structure and composition of Revelation.[8] His general outline shares some similarities to that which will be argued for in the present study. Somewhat puzzling, however, is the discrepancy one finds between this first presentation of structure and what follows in the chapter on the conversion of the nations. Bauckham adjusts his view of structure in order to accommodate the thesis that Revelation ultimately envisions the nations converting to the worship of God and the Lamb. Two important examples illustrate the difficulties that his proposal encounters: the identity of the two scrolls (5.2; 10.2); and, his contention that the chronological order of appearance of significant concepts within the text can be determinative of the author's theological priorities. The result is that Bauckham's entire thesis vis-à-vis the central prophetic revelation of God's final plan to rule sovereignly on earth depends on this tenuous structural proposal.

The repeated appearance of a scroll in the visions of the seer (5.2; 10.2) is thought by Bauckham to represent the *same* scroll.[9] Further, he argues that the content of that scroll is unveiled as the prophetic revelatory message proper, which John wishes to convey to his audience (beginning with 11.1).[10] For several reasons, such an interpretation must be rejected. He begins by pointing out that John is dependent upon Ezekiel 2 for various compositional features in both descriptions. While true, it does not necessarily follow that they must therefore be identical – especially in light of how

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[7] For example, in contrast to his frequent insistence that John maintains the perspective and contextual limits of his biblical sources, Bauckham also arbitrarily identifies intentional exegetical reversal on occasion. Two instances illustrate this point: (1) John's use of Ezekiel's commissioning (10.11; cf. Ezek 2-3), is thought by Bauckham now to *imply* a positive response from the nations while originally Israel's response was *explicitly* predicted to be negative (*Climax*, 263-264); and (2) the description of humanity's response to the two witnesses (11.13) is characterized by Bauckham as "reversal of OT arithmetic" and remnant imagery (*Climax*, 282-283). Notably, both examples help build his case for universal salvation.

[8] Bauckham, *Climax*, 1-37.

[9] On this Bauckham (*Climax*, 243-257) closely follows the argument of Mazzaferri, *Genre*, 265-279.

[10] Bauckham, Climax, 255, "everything which precedes John's consumption of the scroll is preparatory to the real message of his prophecy."

similar images and symbols can serve more than one purpose in the Apocalypse.[11] Second, he speculates that the diminutive form βιβλαρίδιον (10.8) may have been common terminology in prophetic circles for "prophetic revelation."[12] If such identification could actually be demonstrated, it would argue against an identification of the two scrolls as being the same. This seems clear from the suggestion in 5.1-2 that the contents of the scroll in the first instance are the exclusive domain of the Lamb and not the prophet. Third, from the perspective of narrative plot, the suggestion that "revelation proper" does not begin until 11.1 results in a disruption not only of the larger scheme of the author but actually takes place *inside* the parameters of the cycle of seven trumpets (8.2-11.19). The overall sense of order and structure communicated by the use of numerical sequences mitigates against a view that the central message of the book – at least so far as the first audience is concerned – begins so late and unexpectedly. Finally, the unintentional by-product of such a reading is that it minimizes the theological significance of everything that precedes the "revelation proper." It seems particularly difficult to relegate the role of the Lamb in unveiling the first scroll to a secondary place within the overall narrative of Revelation. These observations suggest that the identity of the two scrolls as one is far from certain and that any proposals regarding the structure and theology of the entire book dependent upon it are tenuous.[13]

Perhaps even more difficult to accept is the narrative argument Bauckham makes as he attempts to reconcile the presence of both universal salvation and judgment language in the text. He argues that the visions of universal salvation ultimately deserve theological priority because they appear before and after visions of judgment.[14] Such an argument certainly carries the burden of proof and remains questionable on at least three counts. To begin, it is based on the artificial starting point of Bauckham's structural proposal regarding the identity of the two scrolls (11.1, see above) and thereby simply

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[11] One may note for instance the dual nature of the following images: mounted riders (6.1-8 vs. 19.11-16); name / mark on one's forehead (9.4; 13.16; 14.11 vs. 3.12; 7.3; 14.1; 22.4); and the overlap of features in both the Christological and angelic descriptions (1.12-15; 10.1-3; 14.14-16).

[12] Bauckham, *Climax*, 245.

[13] See also Aune, *Revelation*, xcviii-xcix, who specifically counters Mazzaferri and Bauckham on this.

[14] See generally the argument in *Climax*, 307-318 but especially 310 where he states, "...11.3-13, with its unqualified positive conclusion, gives the positive result of the witness of the martyrs the priority, in God's intention for the coming of his kingdom, over the negative. The theme of the conversion of the nations falls out of view after 15.4, while the visions of final judgment take their course, but it returns to prove its theological priority – and therefore eschatological ultimacy – in the vision of the New Jerusalem."

avoids the implications of the images of judgment that *precede* 10.1.[15] It is further based on a positive exegetical reading of 11.13 that is in itself tenuous and open to significant debate (see below, Chapter 5).[16] Finally, it does not seem to take into account the possibilities created by the array of literary devices, which the author employs (and which at other points Bauckham correctly emphasizes). Not only the prolific use of symbolic images and numerical sequences, but especially the frequent repetition of major themes and motifs by John all suggest that determining theological priority primarily on the basis of chronological appearance in the text is a strained and unsustainable argument.

The issue of what Bauckham's reading suggests for John's implied audience (the seven churches in Asia minor) is a crucial one that he does not address satisfactorily. Three preliminary observations regarding narrative context must be mentioned: the consistent antagonism with which John's rhetoric polarizes the Christian communities and their social contexts;[17] the repeated warnings against participation in or identification with those contexts – both in and beyond the messages to the seven Churches;[18] and, the universal language with which these communities (and believers in general) appear to be described as distinct from outsiders.[19] One would expect Bauckham's proposal to recognize these features and come to terms with how they might be reconciled with a vision of the conversion of the nations. The first two, however, are not addressed at all and the third is marginalized by the observation – based on his arbitrary reading of what "revelation proper" is – that these instances occur prior to the reorienting content of the scroll and its prophetic mandate.

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[15] Bauckham might respond that chaps 6-9 reflect the unsuccessful attempts to procure conversion through 'limited judgment', see *Climax*, 257-258.

[16] The role of 11.1-13 and specifically the exegesis of 11.13 will be evaluated in greater detail in the next chapter.

[17] Note this posture throughout: Rev 2.9-10, 13-14, 26-27; 3.9-10; 6.9-11; 11.5-10; 12.17; 13.9-10; 16.5-6; 17.6; 18.20, 24; 19.1-3; 20.4.

[18] Rev 2.14-15, 20, 23; 3.17-18; 14.12; 16.15; 18.4; 20.11, 14-15.

[19] In spite of a detailed analysis of the seven occurrences of the four-fold formula "every tribe and language and people and nation" (*Climax*, 326-337), Bauckham fails to convincingly explain why only three are preceded by the preposition ἐκ. The first two (5.9; 7.9) clearly refer to the Church as the people of God called out of every nation, while the third (11.9) uses the preposition in a limiting sense of those people who witnessed the death of the two witnesses. In all three cases, the preposition limits the range of the referents and contrasts these instances with those that have all humankind in view (see below, Chapter 5).

The question, quite simply, is how John might have expected these Christians to embrace such a vision theologically and psychologically.[20] Would they accept the claim that their present opponents could ultimately share the same salvation under different criteria? It appears that Bauckham's proposal has not taken sufficient account of the issue of 'pastoral motivation'. Had John envisioned such a motivational crisis (i.e. if he thought such universal expectation would de-motivate his hearers), one can hardly imagine why he would not have anticipated and attempted to address it pre-emptively. Further, if universal language may be understood as being programmatically determinative, there must be an equally plausible function for the particularistic tendencies found throughout Revelation.[21] While Bauckham is aware of the conflicting salvation/judgment images, he does not adequately address the narrow-broad dynamics of John's pastoral communicative strategy. In the final analysis, an issue of such significance left untreated or unexplained, renders his proposal incomplete at best.

Finally, an overemphasis of the kind of OT exegetical techniques that Bauckham advocates creates a lack of awareness of the developing traditions, which the author of Revelation undoubtedly inherited and operated in. At first glance Bauckham's work appears well informed by early Jewish literature. In fact, however, there is a lack of significant interaction with these writings, which either demonstrates their similarities and differences in narrative development, or recognizes their engagement with similar theological issues. Simple association of grammatical and symbolic usage does not do justice to the literary milieu of 2T Judaism. The possibility of an evolution from biblical traditions to John's era must be taken seriously on several levels: widespread use of symbols, images and idioms; common interpretive strategies; and, patterns of

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[20] On another level, Bauckham proposes that by reading 11.3-13 as a parable of the Church's role as a faithful witness, it may be understood as the visionary justification for its role in establishing God's Kingdom in its final form. This he would likely cite as the 'program' John is urging his readers to adopt. Not only does this not address the issue of pastoral motivation, it also depends once again on his positive – yet inconclusive – interpretation of 11.13 as a vision of mass repentance and conversion.

[21] Here Bauckham asserts, "We do not take the images seriously if we allow either to qualify the other...Because Revelation deals in images, it does not make the kind of statements which have to be logically compatible in order to be valid. Each picture portrays a valid aspect of the truth." This explanation simply does not solve the pastoral issues that a universal reading raises. Further, this appears to be an instance where a recognition of 'apocalyptic features' in the text must be balanced with the prophetic / pastoral mindset of the author.

appropriation of those traditions.[22] In response, Chapter 3 (above) sought to demonstrate that biblical traditions with both particularistic and universalistic tendencies were evolving and employed in a variety ways. What remains to be seen is to what degree such development influenced the author of Revelation.

4.3 The Question of Genre

Currently a wide consensus among scholars holds that the majority of the text of Revelation represents many formal features of early Jewish and Christian apocalyptic literature. The opening words of the book –'Αποκάλυψις 'Ιησοῦ Χριστοῦ – seem to confirm this and have given rise to the classification of an entire genre.[23] However, this is complicated by the fact that the author of Revelation also refers to his work as προφητεία (1.3; 19.10; 22.7,10,18,19). Further, that the document is presented in an epistolary framework (1.1-8; 22.10-21) and includes letters to seven churches (2.1-3.21) has been cited as proof of Revelation's epistolary character.[24] Collins rightly observes, however, that this epistolary frame simply facilitated the document's introduction, reception, and circulation within communities where the author was unable to be present.[25] In light of more recent developments in defining and describing apocalyptic thought in early Judaism and Christianity, there can be no doubt that Revelation exhibits literary, religious and ideological features that suggest an apocalyptic character (esp. 4.1-

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[22] See Austin Farrer, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), 53, for a helpful perspective on the evolution and contemporary usage of symbols and ideas.

[23] Obviously, the possibility of circular reasoning limits the usefulness of this observation. This opening phrase is still the focus of some debate in spite of the general consensus as to Revelation's apocalyptic characteristics. Most recently Marko Jauhiainen "ΑΠΟΚΑΛΥΨΙΣ," surveys three main possibilities for this phrase and opts for reading it as a title which anticipates the visions of the two cities (17.1-19.10, and 21.9-22.9). He suggests ἀποκάλυψις is neither a genre marker nor a description of the book.

[24] For the most comprehensive treatment of this subject see Martin Karrer, *Die Johannesoffenbarung als Brief* (Göttingen: Vandenhoek & Ruprecht, 1986). Karrer compares Revelation with the Pauline letters in terms of design and content (*Johannesoffenbarung*, 73-74). While he goes to great lengths to demonstrate the epistolary character of the entire document (not just the opening verses or chapters), the weakness of Karrer's argument is his eagerness to challenge what he perceives to be a premature consensus by scholars on the apocalyptic character and function of Revelation. As a result, he does not take the possibility of prophecy (or a combination of these genres) seriously enough.

[25] J.J. Collins, *Imagination*, 270. See also Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 3. The importance of the epistolary frame for genre identification is further minimized by the contention of this study that 1.9-3.22 is best understood as the first collection of visionary material (see below, 4.5).

22.9 but I argue this for 1.9-3.22 also).[26] Those literary features which characterize apocalyptic thought include "reports of visions, reviews of history presented as prophecies, number speculation, the figure of the *angelus interpres*...the tendency to make frequent allusions to the OT, and the tendency to incorporate a variety of literary forms (testaments, laments, hymns, woes, visions)."[27] Commonly recognized religious and ideological characteristics of apocalyptic thought are also present in Revelation.[28]

At the same time it must also be noted that Revelation resists full complicity with certain broadly accepted apocalyptic tendencies.[29] The question of a document's function is not adequately addressed by the widely accepted definition of apocalyptic genre, as both Hellholm and Aune recognize in somewhat differing ways.[30] The prophetic character of Revelation has never been seriously questioned and yet the important breakthroughs in defining apocalyptic thought created a situation in which the prophetic claims of the document have sometimes been underestimated.[31] The issue therefore is primarily one of how to negotiate the interplay between both prophetic and apocalyptic features in the text, and to determine how they relate in Revelation.[32] The text suggests the following: it can be inferred that the author believed himself to be a prophet (10.8-11; 19.10; 22.8,9); the author believed he was writing prophecy (1.3; 22.7,10,18,19); the book contains two prophetic call narratives modeled on OT precedent (1.9-20; 10.8-11);

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[26] John J. Collins "Introduction: Toward the Morphology of a Genre," *Semeia* 14 (1979): 1-20, for the most influential definition of the apocalyptic genre.

[27] Aune, *Revelation*, lxxvii.

[28] Aune, *Revelation*, lxxvii, includes: "...imminent eschatology, pessimism, dualism (spatial, temporal, ethical), determinism, esotericism, bizarre imagery, an emphasis on individual, transcendent salvation, and an emphasis on the disclosure of detailed knowledge..."

[29] The two most obvious features missing in Revelation are pseudonymity (1.9) and secrecy (22.10).

[30] Hellholm, "The Problem of Apocalyptic," 13-64; and, D. Aune, "The Apocalypse of John and the Problem of Genre," in *Semeia* 36 (1986): 65-96.

[31] E. Schüssler Fiorenza, "Apokalypsis and Propheteia: Revelation in the Context of Early Christian Prophecy," in *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 133-156. See also, her "Composition and Structure," 355-358.

[32] Aune, *Revelation*, xc, suggests that the author has placed "...apocalyptic traditions within a prophetic framework...", while Bauckham, *Theology*, 6, counters "...John's concerns are exclusively prophetic. He uses the apocalyptic genre as a vehicle for prophecy..." Bauckham further suggests that from the author's own perspective such modern distinctions would have been utterly foreign and artificial.

the messages to the seven churches have a relatively uniform prophetic shape;[33] and, there are discernible prophetic oracles within the text at several points.[34]

In summary, the epistolary frame suggests that Revelation was circulated as a letter among at least seven Churches in Asia Minor. Within this framework there is evidence of a direct relationship between author and audience in which he carries some form of prophetic, pastoral authority. John's Apocalypse employs modes of revelation, operates within a cosmological perspective, and espouses a view of 'the End' which all hold significant similarities to early Jewish apocalyptic thought. The working assumption of this study takes seriously the apocalyptic shape and features of the document while recognizing its function in Christian communities to be prophetic.

4.4 Structural Analysis of Revelation

Theories related to the structure of Revelation abound and no certain consensus on the subject currently exists.[35] This is due in part to the prolific use of symbols and numeric sequences, as well as a variety of features in the text, which reflect conventions both of literary composition and oral presentation.[36] Further, there is truth to David Barr's observation regarding the wide range of opinion on this matter that "how you arrange the material depends on what you are looking for."[37] Despite difficulties associated with determining the structure of Revelation, widespread agreement has emerged against the hypotheses of source critics regarding either fragmentary traditions or radical editing of the original author's material.[38] As a result, recent attempts to describe Revelation's

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[33] David Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 275-279, suggests a four-fold structure: (1) the commissioning formula; (2) the central "I Know" section; (3) the call for attention; and, (4) the exhortation to conquer.

[34] Aune, *Prophecy*, 280-288, identifies 1.7-8,17-20; 13.9-10; 16.15; 18.21-24; 19.9; 21.3-4,5-8; 22.7,12-14,18-20; and possibly 14.1-12. See also Bauckham, *Theology*, 3.

[35] For a thorough survey, see G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (NIGCNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 108-151; also, Ralph J. Korner, "'And I Saw...' an apocalyptic literary convention for structural identification in the Apocalypse" *JBL* 120 (2001): 160-183.

[36] See the previous comments on the prophetic function of this document.

[37] David Barr, "Using Plot to Discern Structure in John's Apocalypse," in *Proceedings of the Eastern Great Lakes and Mid-West Biblical Societies* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 23-33.

[38] E. Schüssler Fiorenza, "Composition and Structure of Revelation," *CBQ* 39 (1976): 344-366; A. Yarbro-Collins, "Revelation," in *NJBC*, 999-1000; J. Lambrecht, "A Structuration of Revelation 4,1-22,5," *L'Apocalypse*, 77-104; and, Bauckham, *Climax*, x,1-37.

structure have largely affirmed the basic literary unity of the text in its current form.[39] An overview of Revelation's structure is important for the following reasons: because of Bauckham's use of structure to support his conclusions (see previous section); and in light of the role narrative development plays in this study's critical methods (see this chapter's next section).

How one chooses to address the question of structure profoundly affects the way in which the text is interpreted. Nowhere is this more evident than the way universal language may be understood. Source critics, operating with the assumption that no coherent structure could be discerned in the document's current form, reconstructed the text according to their own sense of chronological or thematic unity.[40] Most often, they qualified the final positive vision of the nations and kings of the earth (21.24,26) as either structurally misplaced, thematically anachronistic, or as a superfluous remnant of an earlier Jewish tradition. While diametrically opposed to source-critical method, Bauckham's view of structure and narrative development (see earlier sections 2.5; 4.2) enables him to read universal language in a thoroughly positive light.[41] As such, both he and source critics serve as examples of the vital role which structural considerations can play in interpreting Revelation.

For the purpose of a general overview, and as a way forward, the various structural proposals can actually be grouped into at least three discernible categories. These categories will be defined on the basis of the kind of results each proposal offers although, as has been noted above, the methodologies by which those results are achieved are important in their own right. In the first place, one finds a large number of interpreters who divide the book into a sequence of visions corresponding to numerical constructs – visions of sevens or seven visions (6 or 8 depending on how the prologue and epilogue are treated).[42] Secondly, many scholars suggest a larger two-fold division of the book: one whereby the material following 12.1 represents either a repetition of the first cycle or a new cosmological perspective.[43] A third approach by literary-narrative critics seeks to

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[39] Recent exceptions include J. Massyngberde-Ford, *Revelation* (1965) and, to a lesser degree, D. Aune, *Revelation* (1997).
[40] See the comments on R.H. Charles in Chapter 2 (2.2.2).
[41] See the review of his proposal in Chapter 1 (above) and the critique earlier in the previous section.
[42] A. Farrar, *Revelation*; E. Schüssler Fiorenza, "Composition."
[43] Yarbro-Collins, "Revelation," 999-1000; Beale, *Revelation*, 622.

discern those features in the text that provide clues as to the author's own sense of structure. This emphasizes how the author might have arranged the material for the benefit of the hearer/reader.[44] Revelation contains a variety of formulas and phrases that could be considered literary markers or signals of an outline or plot development. At yet another level the critic must also consider the added difficulties that a self-proclaimed prophecy presents. The possibility that these visions began as smaller units of oral prophecy, combined with the virtual certainty that they would be performed orally, must necessarily limit which literary devices qualify for consideration with respect to structural options.

Such a categorization of these structural methodologies is admittedly not tidy. A significant degree of overlap often exists between these categories and some commentators apply more than one structural approach to the text. This is for good reason. In recent decades, several different structural proposals have underscored the multi-valent nature of the text.[45] The result, while not a consensus, has been a lively discussion from which key insights and advances have been made. Although the present study advances a somewhat unique proposal that falls within the third category (literary conventions), it will incorporate and build on the insights of this ongoing discussion at significant points.

As a way of exploring the narrative possibilities of Revelation, the introductory phrase ἐν πνεύματι ("in the Spirit") will be used to demarcate those moments in the text that signal the beginning of a new collection of visions.[46] This phrase occurs four times in Revelation (1.10; 4.2; 17.3; 21.10) – each time with direct reference (first person singular) to the narrator/visionary. The assumption is made here that each block of material introduced by this phrase represents an intentional collection of related visions.

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[44] F. Mazzaferri, *Genre*, 35, articulates this view by suggesting, "The literary critic's task is to think the author's thoughts after him...to pay the closest heed to everything the author offers to his own intentions."
[45] Among the more helpful overviews, see Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (HDR 9; Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976); and J. Lambrecht, "Structuration."
[46] For a similar but less developed view of structure see J. Michael Ramsey, *Revelation* (IVPNTCS 20; Downer's Grove: IVP, 1997), 26-32. G. Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 14-17, also affirms this division but emphasizes the command to "come and see" rather than the ἐν πνεύματι phrase. Bauckham recognizes the structural significance of this phrase in a slightly different manner by suggesting, "...the technical phrase ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι (1.10) indicates the beginning of this whole visionary experience. The words ἐν πνεύματι recur three times later in the book ... indicating three major transitions within the whole vision" (*Climax*, 3-4).

Further, the relationship *between* these collections of visions exists in a 'telescoping' dynamic by which each subsequent collection picks up the climactic themes and images of the previous one and unpacks them in greater detail. Therefore, it will be argued that while some temporal progression may characterize each respective vision collection, the progression of thought (narrative flow) in Revelation is advanced not within (inside) these collections but rather through their relationship to one another.

Several observations may be made to support the plausibility of considering the phrase ἐν πνεύματι as central to understanding the structure and narrative development of Revelation: (1) *Character*: if it can be argued that John understood himself to be a prophet delivering a prophecy, then one might expect as literary signals those types of conventions which would make reference to the divinely inspired nature of the reception of revelation.[47] This is precisely what the phrase ἐν πνεύματι implies – a prophetic revelatory experience which would serve to validate the prophet and his message.[48] (2) *Oral presentation*: since John expected his apocalypse to function as prophecy – the words read in the community as though he were delivering the prophetic message himself – the obvious reference to his own prophetic experience would be well-suited to enabling hearers to identify the major movements of the prophetic narrative. (3) *Placement*: each instance of ἐν πνεύματι introduces a new aspect of revelation briefly foreshadowed in an immediately preceding the phrase – a feature which ensures continuity with what has already been envisioned as well as moving the narrative forward by providing a deepening progression of detail.[49] (4) *Location*: each occurrence of ἐν πνεύματι finds John in a new location where he receives further revelation – a common feature of apocalyptic literature.[50] (5) *Heavenly mediator / guide*: each use of ἐν πνεύματι introduces a heavenly figure who serves to mediate the prophetic revelation to the seer

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[47] On ἐν πνεύματι as an "ecstatic experience" see Aune, *Revelation*, 82-83.

[48] Ramsey, *Revelation*, 26, points out that this terminology is commonly used in the New Testament for prophetic behavior (1 Cor 12.3,9; 14.2,15,16; Eph 3.5; 5.18).

[49] The following links may be noted: (a) 4.2 picks up the throne imagery from the final promise in the seven messages made to faithful believers in 3.21; (b) 17.1-3 expands the judgment of Babylon briefly mentioned in 16.19; and, (c) 21.9-10 enlarges the glimpse of the New Jerusalem provided in 21.1-2. Perhaps, but somewhat more tenuously given the nature of epistolary introductions, one could also suggest 1.4-6 as an anticipatory link to 1.9-11.

[50] John begins (a) on the island of Patmos (1.9-10), then (b) finds himself summoned to the throne in heaven (4.1-2), is (c) carried to a wilderness (17.1-3), and (d) finally transported to a high mountain (21.9-10).

variously through commands (1.19; 4.1; 10.4,11; 17.1; 22.10), explanations (5.5; 7.14-17; 17.7-18), and exhortation (19.10; 22.9). In the first two instances this figure is clearly the exalted Christ – a fact the author is at pains to demonstrate by repeatedly making reference to the unmistakable quality of his voice (1.10,12; 4.1; 10.8). In the third and fourth instances, it is a mighty angel who guides the prophet and makes clear that he is not the exalted Christ (19.9-10; 22.8-9). (6) *Visual stimulus*: the use of virtually synonymous commands to "see / be shown" are employed in each case by the mediating figure. They appear to be technical terms associated with prophetic activity: Ὃ βλέπεις γράψον (1.11); Ἀνάβα ὧδε, καὶ δείξω σοι (4.1); Δεῦρο, δείξω σοι (17.1; 21.9).[51] (7) *Parallel structure*: the final two visionary collections compare and contrast the two cities – Babylon the whore (17.1-19.10), and the New Jerusalem (21.9-22.9). The obvious relationship between these two self-contained units – each introduced by ἐν πνεύματι – suggests that this phrase is indeed the literary feature intended by the author to communicate the major movements in Revelation's narrative development. If this can be demonstrated, then they may be considered significant structural indicators.

On this reading, John's Apocalypse consists primarily of four collections of visions each introduced by ἐν πνεύματι and each building on a climactic element (anticipatory thematic link) from the previous collection. This produces a 'telescoping' effect whereby the aim of successive visionary collections is not necessarily temporal progression, but rather greater detail and communicative impact. This view brings together some important structural insights from recent decades of scholarship: (1) Yarbro-Collins' argument for recapitulation recognized that certain themes are revisited by the author throughout the work;[52] (2) Schüssler Fiorenza's observation of intercalation pointed out the presence of interlocking texts as the author's way of covering seams between episodes;[53] (3) Lambrecht's proposal of encompassment[54] showed that progression does exist at some level of the text (i.e. even though 'the End' is already envisioned to a degree at 8.1-5; 11.15-19; 16.19-21; there is still more that the author can say about that event). The function of this structure is to steadily move the hearer/reader

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[51] Aune, *Prophecy*, 274-275, highlights the difficulty of "untangling" prophetic experience and literary artiface.
[52] Adela Yarbro-Collins, *Combat Myth*, 8-13,32-44, and "Revelation," 999.
[53] Schüssler Fiorenza, "Composition," 360-362.
[54] J. Lambrecht, "Structuration," 87-94.

through a consideration of the present context of Christ among the churches (1.9-3.22), to a consideration of the heavenly perspective and judgment of the situation on earth (4.1-16.21), to a description of the certain, eschatological judgment of all the 'players' in the drama (17.1-21.8), to the final vision of re-creation: the New Jerusalem (21.9-22.9). This structural proposal may now be explored for how it might better facilitate understanding of the narrative development within Revelation.

4.4 Narrative Development in Revelation

Earlier in Chapter 1, the description of method emphasized the importance of a document's narrative development to the task of contextualizing universal traditions and language. A disconcerting pessimism often accompanies discussions of the narrative logic (or trajectory) of Revelation. Yarbro-Collins accurately captured this mood by suggesting, "For some the book simply does not make sense. It has no plot and there is no apparent logic in the order of the episodes."[55] Having suggested a proposal for how the structure of Revelation might be understood in light of the ἐν πνεύματι phrases (previous section), the narrative possibilities of that proposal will now be evaluated. The object will be to ascertain what kind of narrative flow or development is communicated by this structure, and then to describe in some detail how the narrative functions (or, more specifically, how the author intended it to function). This will prepare us for Chapter 5 where relevant texts are evaluated in part on the basis of their location in the overall narrative trajectory of the Apocalypse.

The structural proposal in the previous section identified four distinguishable collections of visionary material. Their relationship to each other (and by implication to Revelation's overall narrative scheme) was demonstrated by the presence of anticipatory links (both at a micro and macro level) and frequent repetition of key themes and related symbols. This series of relationships may be termed the narrative development of the book of Revelation and will be sketched out in principle (how it functions) and then described in detail (what it communicates). To gain an overall sense of the narrative development in Revelation we briefly examine the purpose or role of the first and last collections of visions (1.9-3.22 and 21.9-22.9). The working assumption of this study will

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[55] Yarbro-Collins, *Combat Myth*, 8.

be that the author's entire project is rooted in a particular reality of social and religious crisis (first collection of visions), which he hopes to address through the presentation of a cosmic reality (the final collection of visions). One literary hint that this may be so is the presence of symbols, images and theological concepts that are introduced in the present reality and then taken up in the final reality in an expanded format. The role of the second and third collections of visions is to move the narrative toward the goal intended by the author. In doing so, they provide a framework of both historical and cosmological context (perspective), increasing and intensifying eschatological detail, and theological justification for the movement from the first collection to the final collection.

4.5.1 The First Series of Visions (1.9-3.22)

Despite the fact that this first collection of visionary material includes two distinct revelatory events and seven prophetic messages addressed to individual churches, 1.9-3.22 may be understood as one visionary experience (and literary unit). Certainly this is how the author intended this material to be understood. Although there are no good reasons for assuming a break in the prophetic narrative after 1.20, most readings of the first three chapters of Revelation erroneously assume a new beginning at 2.1. In fact the obvious may be stated: that the mediating figure – the exalted Christ – that addresses John (1.10-20) continues to speak without pause in the messages to the seven churches (2.1-3.22). Further, as many commentators note, the introductory formulas in each of the seven messages make use of descriptive details of the exalted Christ found in 1.12-20 as a means of establishing his authority to deliver them through the seer's prophetic activity.[56]

This opening prophetic sequence appears to serve the purpose of unveiling (apocalypse) the conditions of the present reality of the churches for which John is concerned.[57] He does this by portraying Christ as exalted yet intimately present among the churches on the one hand (1.9-20), and demonstrating prophetic, first hand

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[56] Aune, *Revelation*, 74-75; Beale, *Revelation*, 225; Caird, *Revelation*, 27; Charles, *Revelation*, 1:25-27.

[57] It is important to note that one may not limit the presence of historical / circumstantial evidence to this first collection of visions as though it is the only place in the Apocalypse where such information is to be found. Throughout the text one can find material, which reflects the present reality of the Christians to whom John writes, as Lambrecht ("Structuration," 79-80) has convincingly argued. However, while in no way suggesting that 2.1-3.22 exclusively refers to "the things that are" (1.19), it seems clear that they serve as a platform from which John presents the crises of the Christian communities in Asia Minor, and develops the larger narrative.

knowledge of the their situation (2.1-3.22) in spite of his own geographic distance (1.9) on the other hand.[58] From the perspective of the one who "knows"[59] these communities, the presence of both commendation and censure reveal internal and external crises within the communities being addressed. Similarly, there are corresponding warnings and exhortations issued in light of that which is known and revealed about each given community. Finally, each message concludes with promises of rewards, which are directly related to the conditions of the New Jerusalem.

Words of approval are extended variously for diligence and doctrinal purity (2.2,6,24), perseverance in hardship (2.3,9-10,19; 3.10), loyalty of faith (2.13; 3.8), love (2.19), and moral purity (3.4). Conversely, there are stern reprimands condemning loss of "first love" (2.4), tolerance of morally permissive false teachers (2.14-15,20), spiritual apathy and lack of "deeds" (3.2), and spiritual arrogance fueled by material affluence but now recast as spiritual poverty / nakedness (3.15). A surprising degree of severity can be discerned in the words of warning, ranging from removal of a church's lampstand – presumably its very existence or status as a church (2.5) – to attack against the false teachers being accommodated (2.16: "by the sword of my mouth"; 2.22: "a bed of suffering"; 2.23: "death"), to a surprise visitation by Christ himself (3.3), and finally to the threat of rejection by Christ (3.16). Each warning is then further supplemented with an exhortation intended to correct the perceived error or crisis: "repent" (2.5,16; 3.19), remember and enact "first love" (2.5; 3.3), and "hold on faithfully until the end" (2.25). On two occasions instructions are issued to a church community, which received no word of censure or warning that in both instances simply entails the encouragement to be faithful at all costs (2.10: "even to the point of death"; 3.11: "so that no one will take your crown"). The promises of reward are varied and point to some significant element of the final vision of the future toward which the author is weaving his narrative. At the same time, they reflect certain elements of cultural or religious significance specific to the cities in which each particular church exists.[60] These include: the right to the tree of life

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[58] For Aune's analysis (*Prophecy*, 275-279), see above fn.33.
[59] For further evaluation of the prophetic function of the "I know" oracles, see Aune, *Prophecy*, 276-278.
[60] Much has been made of the social, religious and cultural dynamics underlying the very "case-specific" prophetic messages. See especially Colin Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in their Local Setting* (JSNTSup 11; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986), who reassessed and built on the foundational work of

in God's paradise (2.7), immunity to the second death (2.11), hidden manna and a white stone with a secret new name on it (2.17), authority to rule the nations and a morning star (2.26-28), white clothes, a permanent place in the book of life, and recognition by God and the angels (3.5-6), protection from the hour of trial coming on the whole world (3.10), a place in the temple of God as a pillar as well as a share in the name of God, the New Jerusalem, and Christ (3.12), and the invitation to table fellowship with Christ himself (3.20).

This repeating pattern of prophetic commendation, censure, warning, exhortation and promise are part of a document that was presumably read in its entirety in each target community.[61] One may infer, then, that the overall impact created by this first visionary collection was far beyond what the personal delivery by the prophet of a single prophetic message might have accomplished. The author sets about first to describe the current crises in and threats to these Christian communities, and then to set the stakes of their response in an eschatological context. It does not seem too far a stretch to imagine that the author himself would have conceded that these messages in and of themselves would not be enough to address these pressing concerns.[62] From this perspective it is possible to consider the next collection of visions and its relationship to the first visionary collection. Such an exploration may shed light on the reason for the intentional embedding in these prophetic messages of symbols and motifs later expanded in the final visions of the New Jerusalem.

4.5.2 The Second Series of Visions (4.1-16.21)

At first glance, the size of this collection appears so large as to defeat the purpose of analysis. However, this section is in fact a collection of visions in which each part (i.e. individual visions) serves the overriding purpose of the whole. Further, these visions are necessarily linked in narrative purpose with respect to the argument of the whole book. To begin with, the author operates under the assumption that his audience will be most

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W.M. Ramsay, *The Letters to the Seven Churches* (1904; Mark W. Wilson ed.; Updated ed.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994).

[61] Aune, *Prophecy*, 326. See also his analysis of these letters' form in Aune, *Revelation*, 119-124.

[62] This observation is one argument against readings of Revelation that want to divorce the first three chapters from the rest of the book either from a literary (disparate sources) perspective or an eschatological (this-worldly versus other-worldly) perspective.

engaged by a crafting of the narrative that creates suspense and draws them into the storyline. Suspense is created in the protracted development of three cycles of seven (seals: 6.1-8.5; trumpets: 8.6-11.19; bowls: 15.5-16.21) through the literary devices of intensifying repetition and expanding detail. The author then seeks to create personal identification for his audience through the inclusion of three interludes in the narrative (7.1-17; 10.1-11.14; 12.1-15.4). These interludes depict their current situation in an eschatological, missiological and cosmological context respectively. John is given this information from the perspective of the heavenly court (4.1-5.14) to which he has been transported "in the Spirit" (4.2). The heavenly court scene visualizes the order by which all creation is ultimately defined (4.1-11) and the perspective from which all activity in the cosmos is ruled (5.1-14). It is here that the seer delineates the parameters in which judgment and salvation take place.

The three cycles of seven (seals, trumpets and bowls) share significant features in common which suggest that each reflects the same basic concerns. This seems evident from the similarities in their motifs, their use of symbolic conventions, their inspiration from the same compositional sources, and their similar temporal range. While each cycle also presents its own unique elements, these are predominantly the product of emphasis (intensification) and literary license by the seer. Their content – and more importantly the message of their content – is remarkably consistent. Illustrative of this consistency among the three cycles of seven are the following: (1) each cycle makes use of the Biblical traditions of the plagues of Egypt to one degree or another;[63] (2) in every case those who dwell on earth are depicted as the unrepentant enemies of God (6.15-17; 9.20-21; 16.9,21); and, (3) each cycle seems not only to reach 'the End', but they do so with the same literary device – a meteorological 'End formula' (8.5; 11.19; 16.18, 21) which initially recalls the presence of the throne in heaven as the locus from which all salvation and judgment comes (4.5). These cycles serve cumulatively to reinforce in the mind of the hearer that the crises envisioned by John in the initial visionary collection have a cosmological explanation and an eschatologically satisfactory outcome for those who remain faithful to the Lamb.

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[63] Regarding the dominant 'Exodus plague' motif in the judgment scenes see the thorough treatment of Aune, Revelation, 498-506. Also, Bauckham, *Theology*, 70-72; Beale, *Revelation*, 465-467.

As a way of sustaining such faithfulness, the three interludes between these cycles provide a hopeful counterbalance to the cycles of seven. Just as the three cycles are intimately related, so also these interludes share significant functional and literary features. In order, they affirm the eternal protection of those who follow the Lamb (7.4,16-17), the certain vindication of their mission under adverse circumstances (11.5,11-13), and the enactment of divine justice upon those who have antagonized them (14.9-12). Further, they all culminate in hymns of celebration (7.10; 11.15-18; 15.2-4), which include brief descriptions of the final state of the righteous. These motifs anticipate the full description of the New Jerusalem in the final collection of visions toward which the author's narrative is building.

4.5.3 The Third Series of Visions (17.1-21.8)

To this point, John has clearly set out the drama of salvation and judgment on earth and established them as an eschatological reality to be presently reckoned with in light of God's sovereign rule. He now moves the narrative forward once more. In this third collection of visions insight is given into the details of how that judgment is enacted upon each of the major players in this cosmological drama. In virtually reverse chronological order to their initial narrative appearance, John takes seriously the implications for judgment of these participants by providing detailed descriptions of events that required only a few phrases or verses in the preceding collection of visions (albeit with a good degree of repetition). His purpose, therefore, while apparently not a temporal progression beyond the final scenes of the second collection of visions, is to graphically expand in detail God's final enactment of justice in a way that will capture the imagination of his audience. The result is that each 'judgment vignette' may be understood as more or less simultaneous with the others.

The first player in this new movement of the narrative to receive God's justice is the great city "Babylon" (17.1-19.10).[64] The detail with which "Babylon" is now described serves two important purposes for the readers: to make explicit association between the political, religious and social values of Rome and the image of the whore

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[64] Here again one finds an anticipatory link (16.19) just prior to a new "in the Spirit" experience that also provides a new location for the prophet – now in the wilderness (17.1-3).

whose name recalls the ancient Babylonian empire and its world domination;[65] and, to signal threat and imminent danger that the Christians' internal and external crises are intimately connected to this doomed system (18.3). As such, it stands in direct opposition to the values, aspirations and assumptions of the kingdom of God – first described in its heavenly form at the outset of the second collection of visions (4.1-5.14) and then portrayed eschatologically in the final collection (21.9-22.9). Although the entire vision of the judgment of Babylon appears to serve the purpose outlined above, it does so in three distinct movements. In the first place, the visionary journey into the wilderness begins with a calculated piling up of images and epithets intended to make the identity of this city absolutely clear (17.1-18). Babylon, as the purveyor of "adulteries" (17.1-2,4) and persecutor of the saints (17.6) is portrayed as the aggressor in an ill-fated attack against the Lamb (17.12-14), and further as ultimately self-destructing as a result of her unholy alliances (17.15-18). The symbolic intent of this first movement is clear in the words of the mediating angel: "This calls for a mind of wisdom" (17.9). What immediately follows these words is a list of past, present and future kings (from the visionary's perspective) of this great city (empire) which serve to erase any doubt that may remain as to the author's intent.[66] With these broad strokes, the vision provides a rationale for the certain judgment of a city and an empire (system) that on the surface appeared vibrant and indomitable to the prophet's audience.

The second movement of this description of Babylon's judgment (18.1-24) illustrates in microcosm the same 'telescoping' device, which the present study is arguing for at the macro level. Recalling the final broad stroke of the first movement (i.e. the self-destructing collapse of the great city (17.15-18), the narrative moves forward into greater detail describing this destruction in poetic fashion. The laments/taunt songs create a liturgical atmosphere within the text and make this destruction memorable and vivid in a way that simple prose could not. The reasons for the judgment are also expanded in order to find direct application in the various contexts in which the hearers may encounter the influences of this doomed system. The vision is unbending in its indictment: moral and

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[65] This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5 (below).

[66] It is interesting to note how many commentators agree that 17.9-11 makes reference to late first century Rome and a number of its Caesars yet no agreement exists on their identity – something which one may assume would not have been the case among the first readers.

spiritual impurity (18.2,23d), arrogance and leveraging of power (18.7-8,23c), economic excess and flaunted luxury (18.11-19), oppression and injustice (18.20,24) are all justifiable charges against the great city. Again the original hearers are faced with the dissonance between their experience and the claims of the prophet regarding their social reality.

The final movement of this judgment of Babylon depicts the verdict on the nature of the judgment enacted and the resulting response in heaven (19.1-10). "True and just..." is the pronouncement of the heavenly multitude (19.1-3) in response to both the severity of the punishment and the avenging of the oppression of the saints (cf. 6.9-11). Agreement with this verdict is then echoed by the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures who join in a scene of worship and celebration over the victory of God over earthly enemies (19.4-8). The entire series of three movements is then brought to a close with the angelic mediator rejecting John's attempted worship and an affirmation of the prophecy's veracity (19.10). Through this expanded description of Babylon's judgment John's narrative and theological intent is to discourage participation in such a system by his hearers. Here now are the reasons for his exhortations earlier in the first visionary collection. Attention to narrative development reveals that the author seeks to eliminate all options for his hearers / readers but the one he knows is still to come.

The next players in the cosmic drama to receive judgment are the members of the unholy alliance (17.12,17), which joined the great city Babylon in war against the Lamb but then also turned against her in her self-destruction. This alliance between the beast and "the kings of the earth" constitutes the prophet's most frequent way of describing those forces that stand in direct opposition to the rule of God and his people on earth.[67] Since these forces are consistently described in terms of political (military) power, the vision of their judgment begins with a description of its agent -- the exalted Christ as the divine warrior (19.11-16). Some descriptive details signal narrative continuity with the original vision of the exalted Christ (1.9-20): eyes like blazing fire (1.14) and a sharp sword coming out of his mouth (1.16). In contrast to the first vision, this depiction of

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[67] In a general sense 19.18 appears to envision a broader sweep of judgment ("eat the flesh of kings, generals, and mighty men, of horses, and their riders, and the flesh of all people..."). However, 19.20 clearly depicts "...the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered to make war..." thereby setting up the main actors in this particular drama and only making reference to the rest of the inhabitants of the earth by virtue of their association.

Christ includes both kingly and war-like details: mounted on a white horse (19.11), crowns on his head (19.12), a robe dipped in blood (19.13),[68] accompanied by the armies of heaven (19.14), on his robe and thigh the name "King of kings and Lord of lords" (19.16). Completing this description of the warrior is the prophet's insertion of Psalm 2.9 "He will rule them with an iron scepter" – an narrative echo of the same text from which a reward promise was made to the church in Thyatira (2.26-27).

It is this Christ-figure, which the enemies of God now meet – to their utter ruin (19.17-21). Demonstrating that he wants his hearers to follow the narrative development of the whole book, the author incorporates previous images and gives them their eschatologically defined value: the miracles of the false prophet (13.13-15) are exposed as delusions leading to his demise (19.20); and the "fiery lake of sulphur" no longer represents simply the source of evil spirits or partial punishment (cf. 8-9) but rather the place where judgment is finally executed and fully realized (19.20). The summary statement (19.21) regarding the slaughter of "the rest"[69] makes short work of the kings and armies aligned with the beast and false prophet thereby graphically portraying the fate of those who align themselves in the present with any value system that opposes the kingdom of God. The narrative impact of this vision's claim serves to consign symbols of earthly political and religious power to the same fate as the social and cultural image of the great city Babylon. The original hearers would understand judgment being prophetically enacted upon the basic features of their everyday existence.

In the third episode of final judgment, Satan and all those aligned with him are envisioned as judged (20.1-15). While this judgment initially appears temporary (20.1-3), the vision asserts a certain triumphant stance of believers with regard to Satan's power on the one hand (20.4-6), and then culminates with a description of his ultimate demise along with that of those whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life (20.7-15). This partial (20.1-3 "being bound") and full (20.10 "lake of fire") defeat of Satan narratively implies that his final eschatological judgment may produce positive benefits for followers of the Lamb in the present. The final battle scene (20.11-15) not only

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[68] There is significant debate over whether this detail represents the war-like character of this figure (so most commentators), or his redemptive role (i.e. his own blood). On the latter view see Caird, *Revelation*, 242-244, and Sweet, *Revelation*, 283.

[69] On this phrase see Chapter 5 below.

signals the complete victory of the Lamb and his army in the seer's narrative landscape, it also links each of the first three visions in this third collection together by literary means of repetition. One may note here that each of the two preceding 'vignettes' of judgment also concluded with a battle scene: the great city Babylon against the Lamb and his forces (17.12-15),[70] and the beast, false prophet and kings of the earth against the Lamb and his forces (19.17-21). The conclusion can therefore be reached that each of these 'battle scenes' actually describes the same event – the destruction of the enemies of God. Each scene provides a unique perspective of that event based on the particular characters whose judgment is envisioned.

Finally, this third collection of visions depicts the judgment for that group in the drama whom John has had in mind all along – those who remain faithful to the Lamb in adverse conditions. Here one finds both a brief anticipation of their destiny in the New Jerusalem (21.1-2), as well as positive and negative reinforcement of the loyalty issues which feature so prominently throughout Revelation as prerequisites for entry into this holy city (21.3-8). This final vision of 'judgment' clearly functions as a narrative link – in one sense anticipating the final series of visions, but also serving as the conceptual completion of the judgment motif that binds the third collection of visions together. Several echoes from previous visions provide narrative continuity: the identification of the figure on the throne (4.2); the dwelling of God with his people (7.15-17); the abolition of suffering (7.16-17; 14.12-13); and, the warning against disloyal behavior. With this affirmation of the ultimate fate of the faithful followers of the Lamb, John completes this series of judgment descriptions. He asserts that this positive judgment is certain; however, in terms of its graphic description, there is more that he can yet say.

4.5.4 The Fourth Series of Visions (21.9-22.9)

Not only is the fourth collection of visionary material the shortest, it is also the most narrowly focused – one concern dominates the prophetic horizon in this final collection. The narrative goal all along for John has been to bring the ultimate reality of the eschatological New Jerusalem into the foreground of his hearers' consciousness *and* somehow convincingly locate them in it. This is borne out by numerous reminders and

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[70] One may arguably take 18.1-24 as a graphic portrayal of the destruction caused by the battle of 17.12-18.

expansions of the motifs of reward language that characterized the earlier exhortations (first collection of visions). Further, the presence here of warnings, issued earlier throughout the narrative, indicates that the author connects this eschatological setting with the current situation of his readers. In fact, one may argue even further that his purpose in elaborately developing this narrative scheme is to assert that at some unseen/intangible level, such participation in the setting of the New Jerusalem is already possible.

The way in which John introduces his narrative *telos* – the New Jerusalem – is to briefly integrate it as an anticipatory link (21.1-2) at the end of the third collection where a full accounting of correct judgment for all of the players in this cosmic drama is enacted. This is then picked up with full force as John finds himself "in the Spirit" and carried away to a new location – "a high mountain" (21.9-10). This revelatory experience serves to describe the eschatological city and set it in contrast to the great city Babylon in both literary and theological terms. This expansion of detail takes place on two distinct visionary levels: first, the composition of the New Jerusalem (21.9-21); and secondly, the character of the New Jerusalem (21.22-22.9).

First, John describes the city he sees in the following terms: its physical reflection of the spiritual 'shape' of God's people (21.11-14); its overpowering measure (21.15-17); and, its mineralogical composition (21.18-21). Further, its components reflect traditional language used for God's kingdom: angelic representatives (21.12a), the twelve tribes of Israel (21.12b-13), and the apostles of the Lamb (21.14).[71] Reading this description with a view to the overall narrative trajectory reveals that these images and symbols are embedded throughout the narrative and are given their ultimate significance here. The angelic representatives have not only mediated portions of the entire revelatory experience, they have also taken specific roles in relation to the churches, which are being addressed. The language of Israel as the people of God has been employed throughout the visions as a means of labeling and describing the followers of the Lamb – they are not only located in the narrative generally but finally in the New Jerusalem. Third, the inclusion of the apostles of the Lamb recalls their role in the building of the

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[71] This description is not so unlike other NT descriptions of the makeup of God's kingdom on earth (Eph 2.19-22; Heb 12.22-23).

churches as they now find themselves constituted. The measurements seem to suggest more than just overwhelming size, but rather the completeness and wholeness of the city.[72] Finally, the mineralogical description not only recalls various portions of the promise rewards in the first collection visionary material (2.17,28; 3.11), but also further captures the imagination of the readers as they contrast this vision with the image of the harlot "Babylon" (17.5).

At the second level of this detailed description of the New Jerusalem, the prophet's vision unveils the character of the city. Here he depicts the life-giving source of God's intimate presence (21.22-23), the open, inclusive and pure setting (21.24-27), and the quality of its sustaining, nurturing atmosphere (22.1-5). In doing so he revisits what is perhaps his most consistent concern for the churches to whom writes: defining what it looks like to live as the true community of God's people in the hostile confines of the present world. The following instances illustrate direct connections in this final vision to previously mentioned images and motifs: tree of life / paradise of God (22.1-2; cf. 2.7), followers of the Lamb cast in a 'ruling' role (22.5; cf. 2.26-27), name in the book of life (21.27; cf. 3.5), a permanent place in the "temple" of God's presence (21.22-23; cf. 3.12), having God's name written on one's forehead (22.4; cf. 3.12). Again these literary connections to previous elements of the narrative serve to suggest that the author's narrative goal is to bring the eschatological realities of this final vision to bear on the current situation of his audience.

A review of the present approach to the narrative development in Revelation suggests that the first collection of visionary material provides the context for understanding the author's immediate concerns. His solution to the crises he perceives in these Christian communities is that they conceptualize and adopt the perspective of their present and future existence as he describes it in the final collection of visions. The way in which he moves from the former to the latter is by means of two larger collections of visionary material that are intended to provide the information necessary – in increasing and intensifying detail – to commend that theological and practical commitment.

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[72] Perhaps this functions similarly to the use of numbers by the author at other points throughout Revelation.

4.6 Summary

Critical study is conditioned by its assumptions and methodological commitments. The narrative tension created in Revelation by universal language is evaluated in this study within the confines of assumptions regarding both critical methods of study and introductory issues related to Revelation. The current chapter has therefore sought to draw attention to weaknesses in Bauckham's proposal. Further, the working assumptions held here regarding the questions of genre and structure have been briefly summarized. Finally, as an essential element of the critical methods undertaken here, a proposal for an overall narrative reading of Revelation has been offered. Based on these presuppositions, we now begin an exploration of the texts with universal language in Revelation.

CHAPTER FIVE:

Universal Traditions in the Book of Revelation

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 The Contextual Matrix for the Present Study

The universal language with which Revelation depicts the fate of earth's peoples creates logical and narrative tensions that have not yet been adequately evaluated. To address this, a number of important tasks have been undertaken so far. After outlining this study's method and assumptions in Chapter 1, a history of research in Chapter 2 assessed the most pertinent scholarly treatments of the issue. A literary-narrative reading of four early Jewish documents was then provided in Chapter 3. Particular interest was given to whether these writings reflect logical tension, development of biblical traditions, and narrative trajectories similar to that of the Apocalypse. Chapter 4 presented this study's working assumptions on the issues of genre and structure, as well as a proposal for the overall narrative trajectory (logic) of Revelation. These stages of inquiry provide an interpretive frame within which to carry out the driving concern of this study: an investigation into both the literary-narrative intent of texts in Revelation concerned with the fate of the nations, and the influence of developing biblical traditions upon them.

The symbolic imaging and appropriation of biblical traditions with which the visions of eschatological salvation and worship in John's Apocalypse are crafted frequently reflect the milieu of Jewish apocalyptic thought in the 2TP. Attention is given here to the way in which this evolving understanding of those symbols and traditions may have influenced the author of Revelation, or in fact, how he himself may have contributed to such an interpretive movement. On the one hand, Revelation presents a relatively fully developed perspective regarding the fate of the nations when compared with early Jewish apocalypses. It demonstrates awareness of and gathers together a wide range of biblical and post-biblical traditions with universalistic hopes, and retains a significant concentration of idiomatic terms that reflect the possibility of a broadly universal perspective. On the other hand, several factors strongly hint at a much more particularistic perspective on the part of the author: warnings to the faithful; strong polemic against a variety of 'opponents' (human, demonic, mythic); the use of pejorative labels and epithets as part of the symbolic world of the author; and, the presence of

strongly dualistic judgment language. The tension created by these divergent features of the text requires that a thorough study of those passages, which contribute to such a conflicting picture, be systematically undertaken.

5.1.2 Organization and Interpretive Aims in this Chapter

The question of method has already been described in Chapter 1 and applied to several early Jewish documents in Chapter 3: Tobit, the *Similitudes of Enoch* (*1 Enoch* 37-71), 4 Ezra, and the *Animal Apocalypse* (*1 Enoch* 85-90). In light of the more thorough reading of Revelation proposed here, a few further comments on critical method are in order. First, the selection of relevant passages to be evaluated in this chapter is based on the use of various descriptive labels and epithets. A striking feature of the visions of Revelation is the prominent role that certain 'stock phrases' (i.e. labels or epithets) play in their overall style. These expressions (both single word 'labels' for groups and idiomatic phrases) appear in a variety of contexts and with differing rhetorical intent. Some are exclusively pejorative while others function in a more multivalent manner. Attention will be given to the way in which these key idioms and phrases either maintain or depart from their function in biblical traditions and early Jewish apocalyptic convention. These key phrases or labels have been categorized as follows: (1) "nations" / "Gentiles" (ἔθνος); (2) "the inhabitants of the earth" (οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς); (3) other more infrequent but related terms such as "people" (λαός), "humankind" (ἄνθρωπος), and "the rest, remaining ones" (οἱ λοίποι); and, finally (4) "the kings of the earth" (οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς). Analysis of this final category, which occupies the largest portion of this chapter, provides the most important signals as to the author's interpretive strategy with respect to biblical traditions regarding the fate of the nations.

Second, a literary-narrative reading of Revelation presupposes that each instance of the idioms under consideration contributes to our understanding of the author's overall communicative strategy. Conversely, these idioms collectively create the 'narrative logic' within which any individual instance may be contextualized. Therefore, the ensuing literary-narrative and tradition-historical analysis seeks to locate the relevant passages within the proposal for a narrative reading of Revelation outlined in Chapter 4. Each text

is evaluated for its contribution to this overall narrative logic, whether by aiding coherent reading or creating further narrative tension.

Finally, the influence of traditional sources upon John can be demonstrated in terms of his use of symbolic imagery, idiomatic phrases, prophetic strategies of communication, and interpretive tendencies. This influence becomes even more apparent when compared with other witnesses to common interpretive streams in early Jewish apocalyptic and later Targumic literature. Therefore, an exploration of the interpretive possibilities stemming from these traditional sources and of how they might contribute to the conceptual range of symbols, idioms and rhetorical conventions in Revelation is undertaken. The fact that the author is able both to employ the group labels and idioms in more than one way *and* at times applies them to the same referent often leads to confusion on the part of the reader. What significance these terms carry is often determined on a case-by-case basis since the author might use a certain term simply because it appears in a traditional source he is appropriating or, perhaps he more intentionally wishes to cast certain value judgments upon the referent(s) he has in mind. In either case, we find that these terms signal the author's opinion of certain individuals, communities, and groups of people. For the present study, the question is simply how the intentional employment of these idioms reflects his perspective on the fate of the nations in the eschatological future.

5.2 The Nations / Gentiles (ἔθνος)

5.2.1 Introduction

Among the various designations used by the author of Revelation for the human subjects of his visions, ἔθνος appears most frequently.[1] This usage reflects OT traditions and common convention in apocalyptic literature of the 2TP. An evaluation of this term in Revelation is significant for two main reasons, both related to its ambiguity. First, the author appears able to use this term flexibly in regard to both its referents (people of God; opponents of God; humanity in general) and its connotations (positive, neutral and negative). This variability sets it apart from other all-encompassing expressions for

[1] Rev 2.26; 10.11; 11.2,9,18; 12.5; 13.7; 14.6,8; 15.3,4; 16.19; 17.15; 18.3,23; 19.15; 20.3,8; 21.24,26; 22.2.

humanity (οἱ κατοικοῦντες τῆς γῆς, οἱ λοίποι, and ἄνθρωπος). Second, while the tone of language linked with the other terms for humanity seems to preclude their use in visions of the consummated future age, this is not the case with ἔθνος. One finds it present in the hymn to God as King of the nations (15.3-4) and in the description of participants in the New Jerusalem (21.24-26; 22.2). However, less clear is its function in the reference to God's final display of justice and judgment in the seventh trumpet sequence (11.15-18). These episodes, as they diverge from the more frequent negative uses of ἔθνος, require closer analysis.

5.2.2 ἔθνος in Biblical Traditions

In general, the term ἔθνος is used in the NT in two distinct but related ways: (1) as a general term for nations or people groups; and, (2) as a way of denoting foreigners, outsiders, or pagans / Gentiles.[2] These two uses find their precedent in the language of the HB where the terms גוי ("Gentiles / nations") and עם ("people / assembly / nation") carried differing nuances while at the same time displaying some semantic overlap. Septuagint translators sought to clarify the semantic differences of these terms by rendering these Hebrew terms with ἔθνος and λαός respectively. While not entirely consistent, this tendency in translation provided a framework for the distinct application of these terms.[3] One exception to this pattern is evident in those cases in which these terms occur together in a textual unit. In those instances where OT traditions use the terms גוי (ἔθνος) and עם (λαός) together, they function synonymously to signify an all-inclusive view of humanity. This is particularly pertinent in Revelation where these two terms appear together in all seven instances of the four-fold formula.

Excursus Two: The Four-Fold Formula in Revelation

On seven occasions, the author employs a formula comprised of four ethnic units (5.9; 7.9; 10.11; 11.9; 13.7; 14.6; 17.15). The literary effect of the formula is primarily to serve as a

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[2] BAGD, "ἔθνος," 218.

[3] See R. Clements, "גוי" *TDOT*, 2:426-433, and G. Von Rad, "עם" *TDOT*, 11:164-177, for detailed analysis of these terms and their related usage. The general tendency of the LXX was to render גוי with ἔθνος and עם with λαός. This reflects the tendency for גוי to denote a political/territorial affiliation while עם has more familial/racial overtones. Such nuancing of these terms is significant since גוי is never used in construct with the name of a deity. In the OT, only עם is used to qualify Israel as the people of יהוה.

circumlocution for humanity in its entirety.[4] While the pattern itself is striking for its uniformity, no two instances of the formula are identical. In every case the order of the units is different and, on two occasions, a new unit substitutes one element. Thus, three of the four elements appear consistently (ἔθνος, λαός, γλῶσσα) and the fourth (φυλή) is replaced twice – once by βασιλεύς (10.11), and once by ὄχλος (17.15). While the roots of this formula are evident in several OT traditions where two or three elements are found together, the author of Revelation expands the formula to include four elements on all seven occasions of its use.[5] The biblical traditions that inform this formula have most often been suggested as Genesis 10.5,20,31; Daniel 3.4,7,29[LXX 3.96]; 5.19; 6.25[LXX 6.26]; 7.14 (more distantly Isa 66.18; Zech 8.22; cf. 4 Ezra 3.7; Jdt 3.8; *Pss. Sol.* 17.29).

This formula, as a literary convention intended to convey universality, does not represent universalism on the part of the author in its own right.[6] This is so primarily in light of the differing contexts in which the formula appears (i.e. 5.9: constituted by those who worship the Lamb; 17.15: locative description of the Babylon the great whore). Only case specific investigation can determine the boundaries and implications of the four-fold formula regarding eschatological salvation (see the analysis below). Issues which must be considered include: whether certain ethnic units in combination have special meaning; whether literary context predetermines limitations regarding the formula's referents; and, the function of potentially qualifying grammar.[7] Thus it is apparent that, rather than the formula aiding an identification of how the term ἔθνος functioned for the author, the use of ἔθνος itself contributes to the ambiguity of the formula.

5.2.3 Literary-Narrative Function of ἔθνος in Revelation

The author's use of ἔθνος may be classified into four discernible categories, which reflect the formative role several key OT traditions (MT and LXX) play in the conceptual range of this term. First, ἔθνος represents the broadest and most natural understanding of the term – a neutral way of referring in an all-encompassing sense to humanity without any particularly positive or negative connotation (13.7; 14.6; 16.19; 17.15; 18.23; 20.3,8). Second, on at least two occasions this term is used as part of a formula which signifies the trans-nationally constituted people of God – specifically the

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[4] Aune, *Revelation*, 361, suggests that these lists "cumulatively emphasize universality."

[5] Bauckham, *Climax*, 326-337; Aune, *Revelation*, 361-362; Prigent, *Commentary*, 257; Beale, *Revelation*, 359-360.

[6] *Contra* Bauckham, *Climax*, 326-337. Here the last section of his chapter entitled "The Conversion of the Nations" is devoted to a detailed analysis of the numerical significance, literary contexts and theological implications of this formula. He argues that this formula is evidence of "numeric composition" (i.e. four elements and seven instances = complete universality) and that "in the symbolic world of Revelation, there could hardly be a more emphatic indication of universalism." Here, of course, while his observation on *universality* is evident, his insistence on *universalism* (his definition as conversion of the nations) is much less clear. See the earlier critique in Chapter 4 (above) where we point out that Bauckham argues that a change in sphere of reference from the people of God in the first two instances of the four-fold formula to humanity as a whole in the remaining five instances is suggestive of the author's overall emphasis on ultimately universal conquest of the nations by the Lamb in the form of their conversion. This critique of Bauckham on this point is also made by Prigent, *Commentary*, 257.

[7] In at least three instances the force of a preposition is crucial to the interpretation of the formula: ἐκ in the case of 5.9 and 7.9; ἐπι in the case of 10.11.

Christian communities (5.9; 7.9). Third, the largest category of usage denotes humanity collectively in starkly negative terms as those who align themselves with demonic forces against God (2.26; 10.11; 11.2,9,18; 12.5; 14.8; 18.3; 19.15). Finally, this term is used in contexts depicting the eschatological future where the comprehensive rule of God has been decisively established (15.3,4; 21.24,26; 22.2). The interest of this study is primarily with the final category.

This overview of the use of ἔθνος reveals not only that the term was one favoured by the author, but also that it functioned for him as a neutral term. Its appearance in a variety of settings indicates that it represented a relatively broad referential field. Not only is the author able to apply this label to diverse groups of people, he actually employs the term in instances which run in opposite directions. This apparent flexibility of ἔθνος emphasizes the necessity for case-specific contextual evaluation of the texts in which it appears.

5.2.3.1 <u>ἔθνος as a Neutrally Collective Term</u>

As we have already noted, the author of Revelation employs the term ἔθνος in its broadest and most neutral sense on seven (7) occasions – as an all-inclusive catchword for humanity. In doing so his interests appear to include an attempt to depict the comprehensive nature of his eschatological visions and their global effects. This means that before one makes any judgment regarding the final fate of the nations, certain texts simply provide the information that the author's vision leaves no person or group unaccounted for. In at least five instances humanity is portrayed as victimized pawns in a larger cosmic struggle in which the forces of evil (beast, demons, spirits, Babylon) all deceive or lead people astray (13.7; 17.15; 18.23; 20.3,8). This victim status, according to the author, does not absolve humanity but rather, implicates all people in a global movement of resistance against God's rulership. Further, ἐθνος is also the label for the group to whom the angel proclaims the eternal gospel ἔχοντα εὐαγγέλιον αἰώνιον εὐαγγελίσαι ἐπὶ τοὺς καθημένους ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶν ἔθνος (14.6),[8] and to whom the fallen cities in the cataclysmic destruction of the earth belong (16.19).

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[8] An interesting feature of this particular text is that it takes two idiomatic phrases "those who live on earth" and the four-fold formula "every nation, tribe, tongue and people" and equates them (see further below, *Excursus Three*).

Attention to the literary contexts of these passages reveals that their use may not be as neutral as initially thought. In every one of the seven occasions under consideration, contextual indicators suggest that by the term ἔθνος a general reference is being made to earth's peoples who stand in opposition to God. This leads to the general observation that while on a number of occasions ἐθνος is not distinctively pejorative, it nevertheless does not encourage positive connotations.

5.2.3.2 ἔθνος and the Faithful Community

Rev 5.9; 7.9

On two occasions in Revelation the author employs the term ἔθνος in a formulaic label to designate the people of God. These two texts (5.9; 7.9) incorporate the four-fold formula that appears seven times in Revelation (see above, *Excursus Two*). Both are visionary scenes in which the people of God are described as constituted multi-ethnically. For most commentators, the identity of those described by the formula as the people of God (for John, the Christian church) is beyond doubt. Two factors contribute to this understanding: the literary contexts (5.1-14; 7.1-17); and, the force of the identical grammatical constructions.

In 5.9 the exalted Christ is celebrated as the one who "*ransomed (people) to God through your blood from every tribe and language and people group and nation*" (ἠγόρασας τῷ θέῳ ἐν τῷ αἵματί σου ἐκ πάσης φυλῆς καὶ γλώσσης καὶ λαοῦ καὶ ἔθνους).[9] The entirety of 5.1-14 is concerned with the unique character and role of the Lamb to execute God's plan of justice and salvation.[10] This is depicted in a scene where he is deemed worthy to open a seven-sealed scroll (5.1-7) and then worshiped on account of his sacrificial redemption of humanity (5.8-13). The image of "*a lamb standing as though slain*" (ἀρνίον ἑστηκὸς ὡς ἐσφαγμένον – 5.6; cf. 5.9; 13.8) is an obvious attempt to root this figure of the exalted Christ in historical perspective (in fact, according to 13.8, 'pre-history'). By making a connection between cosmological and earthly

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[9] Prigent, *Commentary*, 256-257, suggests that Rev 5 as a whole is the celebration of Christ as the Passover Lamb whose redeeming sacrifice is not for one people group alone (Israel) but for "all men, whatever their race, their language or their nation."

[10] This recalls the function of the anointed king in Ps 2 (see below, *Excursus Three*) and implicitly echoes the messianic agent figures in *1 En.* 46-48 (on the "Son of Man" figure, see above, chap. 3), and *Pss. Sol.* 17.23-24,26,39. Further, see both Aune (*Revelation*, 335-336) and Müller (*Offenbarung*, 154-155) who cite H.P. Müller, "Die himmlische Ratversammlung," *ZNW* 54 (1963): 254-267.

reflections on salvation history, this vision commends a view of the people of God – trans-nationally, but not universally constituted – that is not concerned with temporal categories. Therefore, it appears a false distinction, to suggest that 5.9 depicts a 'present' or 'incomplete' view of the people of God when the literary context seems to militate against a temporal reading of any kind.[11]

Similarly in 7.9, the seer envisions an innumerable multitude that worships God and the Lamb in the heavenly court comprised "*from all nations and tribes and people groups and languages standing before the throne*" (ἐκ παντὸς ἔθνους καὶ φυλῶν καὶ λαῶν καὶ γλωσσῶν ἑστῶτες ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου). Aside from the considerations of immediate context and the function of these two texts in the narrative trajectory of Revelation – as constitutionally descriptive of the people of God – there are also grammatical constraints that make the limits of this phrase clear.[12] The literary context of 5.9 suggests that temporal categories are irrelevant for the author's constitutional description of the people of God. Tellingly, in 7.9 *the same grammatical construction* locates the people of God beyond temporal boundaries – in a state whose description obviously calls to mind a future beyond time (7.15-17; cf. 21.4). The author locates the people of God (as described in 5.9; 7.9) in the same place as the vision of the New Jerusalem in 21.1-8. Further, in light of the narrative location of 7.1-17 between the sixth (6.11-17) and seventh (8.1-4) seals – i.e. at the time of the End – this vision clearly carries some definitive parameters in terms of its function in the narrative trajectory of Revelation.[13]

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[11] *Contra* Caird, *The Revelation*, 77, who states "The redemption of men from every tribe, tongue, people and race is far from being the whole story of Christ's atonement as John understands it." While here Caird makes the valid point of the ultimate effect of salvation in all of creation, his underlying point is to anticipate what he understands to be salvation of all of humanity in the final visionary sequence of the book. It is this line which Bauckham, *Climax*, 333-337, follows with greater attention to detail as outlined above in the *Excursus Two.*

[12] Several observations related to the grammatical construction of this phrase (and in 5.9) bear mentioning: (1) the use of the identical partitive genitive construction in both texts limits the range of the group being envisioned. See Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, 359, who argues that the force of the instrumental dative (ἐκ) suggests that "This is not a redemption of all peoples without exception but of all without distinction (people *from* all races), as 14.3-4,6 makes clear"; and, (2) the polysyndetic list of the four ethic units cumulatively suggest that the larger scope of the phrase is universal (Aune, *Revelation*, 325,362, suggests that the universality of the phrase sets in relief a subset of Christians – evidence of this multi-ethnic constitution is the rise among early Christian authors of the label *tertium genus* "third race"). See also above *Excursus Two.*

[13] See further the narrative proposal in Chapter 4, and the discussion on "the kings of the earth" in 6.15-17 below.

5.2.3.3 ἔθνος as Humanity set against God

A third application of this term in Revelation reflects a common prophetic and apocalyptic strategy to portray all those outside the community of faith as actively antagonistic toward God and his people (2.26; 10.11; 11.2,9,18; 12.5; 14.8; 18.3; 19.15). This is often heightened in biblical traditions depicting the eschatological future. In this regard no OT tradition exerts as much influence on the communicative strategy of John's Apocalypse as Psalm 2.

Excursus Three: Psalm 2 as an Interpretive Template in Revelation

While numerous OT texts contribute to the language and imagery with which the author of Revelation constructs his symbolic universe, he unquestionably demonstrates a predilection for certain texts. The particular influence of Psalm 2 upon Revelation's framing of the fate of the nations has been noted by virtually all commentators.[14] Evaluating the reasons for this marked influence requires attention to the way in which the psalm originally functioned in Israel's history and then underwent a process of developing interpretation in early Jewish thought. Psalm 2 has been broadly classified as a royal psalm based on internal features rather than form. More specifically, it has been identified as a coronation psalm – a reflection of words spoken ceremonially to affirm the pre-eminence of God among the nations surrounding Israel.[15] The implication of the psalm then is that acknowledgment of Israel's God requires acknowledgement of his 'anointed son' – the king. Craigie has convincingly argued that, in light of the psalm's likely origin in the setting of the Hebrew monarchy, there is no certain evidence that its composition carried messianic intentions.[16]

The messianic ideals and eschatological hopes with which this psalm became synonymous reflect a developing interpretive tradition. Craigie suggests that with the demise of the monarchy new associative complexes were required to maintain the idea of God's sovereign control of human affairs. This "radical rethinking within ancient Judaism" included took two discernible forms: (1) the hope for a new covenant (Jer 31) which implied a new kingship; and, (2) the eschatological projection of an "anointed one" (originally attributed to an earthly king) who would act as God's agent on earth (cf. Dan 9.25).[17] It is within this developing tradition – seen first in the prophetic writings of Israel and then in the apocalyptic literature of early Judaism – that we may locate the psalm's appropriation by John. Charles suggested that the first evidence of messianic interpretation of Psalm 2 was to be found in *Psalms of Solomon* 17.26-27,39.[18] There is also evidence that other NT writers made these messianic associations to a number of Jesus traditions informed by Psalm 2 (baptism: Matt 3.16-17; Mk 1.10-11; Lk 3.21-22; death,

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[14] Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 67-68, uses John's use of Ps 2 as an example of his prophetic preference for certain OT traditions. See also Aune, *Revelation*, 209-212; Beale, *Revelation*, 266-268; Charles, *Revelation*, 1:74-77.

[15] Peter Craigie, *Psalms 1-50* (WBC 19; Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 64-65. Eaton, *Kingship and the Psalms*, 111, suggests that the words of the psalm would have been spoken by the king himself in the context of coronation; however, Craigie suggests that from a literary perspective it is best to notice the change in speakers throughout the psalm (2.1-3: psalmist speaks and recounts the arrogant words of foreign nations and kings; 2.4-6: the Lord speaks; 2.7-9: the king speaks; 2.10-12: the psalmist advises the foreign nations and rulers).

[16] Craigie, *Psalms*, 68-69.

[17] Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, 68.

[18] Charles, *Revelation*, 2:136; Aune, *Revelation*, 211-212.

resurrection and exaltation: Acts 4.24-28; Heb 1.5; 5.5; 7.28). Thus the interpretive reading of Psalm 2 evident in Revelation stands well within a developing tradition of messianic exegesis; and yet, it seems also to push that interpretive strategy further forward in terms of its polemic.[19] Significantly for the aims of this study, the influence of Psalm 2 occurs at various stages throughout the visions of the Apocalypse. As such, this psalm appears to inform a consistent rhetorical direction along the entirety of the document's narrative trajectory.

Three primary texts form the basis for evaluating the influence of Psalm 2 in the negative depiction of the nations: 2.26-27; 12.5; and 19.15.[20] Further, the rhetorical stance of these three texts also evidently informs several other texts that depict the nations in negative and antagonistic terms (11.2,9,18; 14.8; 18.3).[21] In the case of 2.26, the preceding literary context contains strong warnings regarding what the author perceives to be tolerance of idolatry on the part of some in the community (2.20-24). Resistance by the faithful against any form of accommodation with such practices will result in eschatological reward that the author describes with the language of Psalm 2: "*I will give you authority over the nations*" (δώσω αὐτῷ ἐξουσίαν ἐπὶ τῶν ἐθνῶν). In doing so he associates the future activity of these Christians with the enactment of the messianic office, which he later attributes to the exalted Christ *with exactly the same text* (12.5; 19.15).

Despite the potential textual difficulty with Psalm 2.9 (LXX),[22] both 12.5 and 19.15 provide a literary context within which this psalm is quoted that contains images of militaristic conquest. In 12.5 the vision of the woman in the desert who gives birth to a son who "*will rule the nations with a rod of iron*" (μέλλει ποιμαίνειν πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ) is clearly messianic and anticipates a war in heaven between Michael

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[19] Bauckham, *Theology*, 69-70, rightly describes the "militant messianism" which John inherited and developed based on Ps 2. As part of Bauckham's more balanced treatment of Revelation in this smaller volume, his insight here undermines his reading of Ps 2 in the volume reviewed earlier (*Climax*, 314).

[20] Prigent, *Commentary*, 188-189, also emphasizes the relationship of these texts and their dependence upon Ps 2. He follows Charles with regard to the similar messianic exegesis of the Ps 2 in *Pss. Sol.* 17.23,26-27 and the similarities between Rev 2.26-27; 12.5; and 19.15.

[21] It is noteworthy, however, that in at least two of these instances (11.3-13 and 14.6-20) Bauckham argues for an ultimately positive perspective on the final fate of the nations on the part of the author.

[22] Here the main point of contention is the fact that John obviously follows a LXX translator by using the term ποιμαίνω "to shepherd, rule" where the unpointed MT has תרעם which derives from רעע "to break, smash." Several proposals have been offered – the most likely being that the LXX translator assumed the unpointed imperfect verb to derive from רעה "to shepherd" (a plausible reading but not likely in light of the negative context). See especially the discussion of Aune (*Revelation*, 211-212) who largely follows Charles (*Revelation*, 1:75-76). For our purpose here, the significance of this confusion lies in the fact that *conceptually* the idea of shepherding can seem much less harsh and potentially optimistic – especially so in light of its associations elsewhere in the NT with Jesus and his followers.

and the dragon (12.7-9). Similarly in 19.15, the image of the 'warrior Lamb' who confronts and destroys all demonic and earthly forces gathered against him is described as one who "*will rule them* [nations] *with a rod of iron*" (ποιμανεῖ αὐτους ἐν ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ). In this case the verb πατάσσω "to strike down, touch" is also used to qualify the way in which the Lamb's ruling of the nations is to take place – the description of which then occurs in 19.17-21 (see below on "the kings of the earth"). These are the associational images that contribute to a view of the groups linked with the term ἔθνος as antagonistic opponents of God and his people – in each case indebted to Psalm 2.

Finally, several texts are associated with this messianic interpretation of Psalm 2 in a more indirect way. The proleptic vision of the final realisation of God's decisive rule over all creation in 11.18 (see the proposal for Revelation's narrative trajectory in chap 4 above) incorporates the antagonism of, and futile resistance against, God by the nations. Here the motif of the 'rage' of the nations is appropriated (cf. Ps 2.1-2) with striking similarity – although the language used is not precisely equivalent (Rev ὀργίζω; LXX φρυάσσω). Thus 11.18 reflects the violence (11.2) and complicity (11.9) of the nations – and here ἔθνος refers to humanity set against God. The relationship between 14.8 and 18.3 illustrates a further component to John's use of several all-encompassing terms for humanity (including ἔθνος). While other biblical traditions supply the imagery for John in these instances (see below), Psalm 2 provides the polemic and rationale (against the nations) that allows him to use ἔθνος interchangeably with other negative labels for humanity. Revelation 18.3 not only reflects the language of 14.8, it also serves as an inverted restatement of 17.2 (see below on "the kings of the earth"). Therefore, the term ἔθνος in 14.8 denotes the same referent as the idiom "the inhabitants of the earth" in 18.3.[23] These associations are in large part possible (and held together) by the underlying influence of Psalm 2 in which the nations collectively are presented as angry, arrogant and ultimately antagonistic toward God (and his messianic agent). Thus, while each of these terms serves its own specific purpose in the symbolic world of the author and, while at other times they function together as a cumulative statement of universal scope, they also appear to function *interchangeably* as collective designations in yet other instances.

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[23] J.P. Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse: The Transformation of Prophetic Language in Revelation 16,17-19,10* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1989), 315-316.

5.2.3.4 ἔθνος in the Scenes of Eschatological Vindication

Finally, in three significant instances the term ἔθνος is used in visions of the eschatological future – scenes in which God is universally acknowledged as the "King of the nations" (15.3) and locus of all existence (21.24,26; 22.2). Some scholars interpret these texts to reflect an eschatological scenario in which the nations of the world (regardless of any previous antagonism) express their allegiance to God in acknowledgment and worship. Whether such language suggests genuine conversion must be evaluated contextually in each case.

Rev 15.2-4

Just prior to the introduction of the third series of seven bowl judgments (15.1; 16.1-21), the author records what he terms "the song of Moses" (15.2-4). In this particular hymn, two important features related to the author's use of ἔθνος language emerge: (1) God is referred to as "*king of the nations*" (ὁ βασιλεῦς τῶν ἐθνῶν – 15.3); and, (2) the hymn asks the rhetorical question "*Who will not fear and glorify your name, Lord? All nations will come and worship before you...*" (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ἥξουσιν καὶ προσκυνήσουσιν ἐνώπιόν σου – 15.4). Both the literary context and the influence of biblical traditions contribute to the way in which this hymnic text functions. Although called "the song of Moses" this hymn does not reflect one specific tradition. Rather, as a conflation of several traditions, the author creates an *eschatological reinterpretation* of the deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea.[24]

The sense of universally unavoidable compulsion to worship and acknowledge God as Creator and just Judge is to be found in the rhetorical question (based on Jer 10.6-7; Ps 86.9).[25] The paradigm of the Exodus tradition on which this scene is based reflects the terror with which the nations recognize Israel's God (Exod 15.14-16; cf. Deut 32; Jer 10)[26] – an interesting parallel to 11.3-13 where fear is the response of οἱ λοίποι.[27]

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[24] The sources include: Jer 10.6-7; Ps 86.9-10; 98.1-2. See Eckhart Schnabel, "John and the Future of the Nations," in *BBR* 12.2 (2001): 243-271 (esp. 262-265); Prigent, *Commentary*, 460-461; Beale, *Revelation*, 792-800; Müller, *Offenbarung*, 274-276.

[25] Müller, *Offenbarung*, 275, "Die rhetorische Frage drückt die Unausweichlichkeit dieses Geschehens aus."

[26] Schnabel, "John and the Future," 263, points out that the broader context of each OT text emphasizes the judgment of Israel's enemies which leads to Israel's vindication.

[27] *Contra* Bauckham, *Climax*, 273-283, but so Müller, *Offenbarung*, 215-217.

Further, the scene wherein the nations come to worship (15.4) reflects a common expectation of ultimate recognition of Israel's God (Isa 2.2-4; 66.19). Here we find an interesting parallel to the *Similitudes* (*1 En.* 62-63) where "the Lord of Spirits" is worshiped and acknowledge as rightful ruler and judge – the difference there is that those kings, rulers and powerful who come to worship realize and admit that it is too late for them to be saved.[28] The evidence reveals the communicative intent in 15.2-4 to be vindication – both of God and his faithful people. From the perspective of the literary context, this reaffirmation of God's just and true ways is one way the author rationalizes the horror of the impending bowl judgments.

Rev 21.24-26

The issue of what kind of reality the language of 21.24,26 reflects – where "*the glory and honour of the nations will be brought*" into the New Jerusalem – will be discussed in conjunction with "the kings of the earth" in the final section of this chapter (5.5).

Rev 22.2

This particular text poses interest from the standpoint that, while modelled closely on a biblical tradition (Ezek 47.12) the idiom in question (ἔθνος, gen. pl.) has been added. It is not without reason that commentators who emphasize the role of biblical traditions represent a wide range of opinion on this point.[29] The difficulty of this addition becomes a little clearer when the complimentary literary aims of this study – literary context and narrative trajectory – are re-considered. In the verses immediately following 22.2, the author reveals that the participants he envisions in this eschatological setting have already been alluded to earlier in the narrative. Further, in the document's narrative trajectory there is an earlier promise that the faithful will "*eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God*" (2.7).[30] This promise, based on the author's view of the people of God (5.9; 7.9), is not the only one early in Revelation that reappears in the climactic

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[28] See above, 3.3.4.3.

[29] Ezek 47.12 MT ועלהו לתרופה "and its foliage for healing." A wide spectrum of interpretation exists here: Aune, *Revelation*, 1178, suggests that "the allusion is simply mechanical, there is no place in the eschatology of Revelation for 'the healing of the nations'," while Bauckham, *Climax*, 316, asserts "John's interpretation of Old Testament prophecy in line with its most universalistic hopes...is illustrated by the way that...he has adapted a prophecy that makes no reference to the nations in order to apply it to the nations."

[30] See on this Prigent, *Commentary*, 627.

vision: those who overcome will rule / reign (22.5; cf. 2.26-27); they will receive a name (22.4; cf. 2.17; 3.12); and they will be in the city (22.3; cf. 3.12). Thus precisely those rewards that the faithful have been promised early in Revelation are described in the vision of the New Jerusalem *in the category of nations*.

5.3 "The Inhabitants of the Earth"

5.3.1 Introduction

A favourite expression, by which John denotes the entirety of humanity *apart from the Christian communities*, is the all-encompassing "the inhabitants of the earth" (οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς). At least three further constructions occur in the book which appear to function in a virtually synonymous way.[31] Not only do these phrases bear etymological and conceptual affinity with the primary idiom, their contextual use also appears to suggest that the author intended to communicate the same idea of 'universal scope' with each of them. Several further related terms appear to carry this inclusive function in Revelation and will be examined alongside "the inhabitants of the earth" (see below, 5.4). The author appears to employ this idiom and its variations in a consistent manner throughout the document, unlike his use of ἔθνος (see above). Its literary and communicative influence may be evaluated in light of how it was used in those traditions, which either influenced John or represent the same sources of imagery and polemic he used. One may construct a preliminary picture of the author's perspective of the world's peoples not only in light of what types of contexts this term appears in, but equally where it does not appear.

The designation "the inhabitants of the earth" in early Jewish apocalyptic literature,[32] particularly its use in universal eschatological statements, suggests an ability to conceive of a final future scenario in which all peoples of the world are taken seriously and into the final accounting of all things. While possibly functioning more neutrally in some instances in *1 Enoch* and 4 Ezra, for example, the increasingly negative force of this symbol in apocalyptic literature is in part due to its polemical use in John's

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[31] These include: (1) "the tribes of the earth" (αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς – 1.7); (2) "the whole inhabited earth" (τὴν οἰκουμένην ὅλην – 3.10; 12.9); and, (3) "the whole earth" (ὅλη ἡ γῆ – 13.3; 16.14).

[32] *1 En.* 37.2,5; 40.6,7; 48.5; 53.1; 54.6; 55.1,2; 60.5; 62.1; 65.6,10,12; 66.1; 67. 7,8; 70.1; 4 Ezra 3.12,34,35; 4.21,39; 5.1,6; 6.18,24,26; 7.72,74; 10.59; 11.5,32,34; 12.24; 13.29,30; *2 Apoc. Bar.* 25.1; 48.32,40; 54.1; 55.2; 70.2,10; *T. Ab.* [Rec. A] 3.12; [Rec. B] 6.16; *L.A.B.* 3.3,9,12; 4.16; CD[a] 10.9.

Apocalypse.[33] The evidence seems to suggest an exclusively negative or pejorative use of this phrase and its related terms (unquestionably so in 8.13; 13.8,12,14; 17.8). While the traditional sources – both from the Psalter and prophetic writings – that supply this idiom to the author of Revelation suggest such a function, an overview of the most significant passages bears this out.

5.3.2 "The inhabitants of the earth" in Biblical Traditions

In their most straightforward sense, κατοικέω (to live, dwell, inhabit) and οἰκουμένη (living, inhabiting, dwelling) refer either to the state of being indwelt or settled (transitive), or the action of dwelling, living (intransitive). They do not necessarily carry any particular figurative or religious connotation but simply represent the action or state of being at the most basic level of existence. This use is borne out by the sheer volume of instances of these terms in ancient Greek literature, the LXX and the NT.[34] κατοικέω is the common LXX rendering for numerous Hebrew verbs among which the most common are שכן and ישב.[35] Since these words can function as synonyms in spite of their differing semantic ranges, their interchangeability as far as the LXX translators are concerned seems certain. The main sense which κατοικέω implies is the idea of residing, living in, or inhabiting a certain area. When read without qualifying phrases that either specify location or certain characteristics, these terms refer to the residents of a region in a generic, collective way.

The importance of this term should not, however, be underestimated when one probes its figurative uses – such as political, religious and economic. Both κατοικέω and οἰκουμένη appear to have the ability to carry such figurative meaning within specialized contexts that may denote either the implied attitude (posture) or allegiance of the collective subject of the verbal phrase. One may note the obvious feature that while the former common usage lends itself to narrative literature, the latter usage – with its

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[33] Aune, *Revelation*, 240; Prigent, *Commentary*, 205-206. See also the earlier quotes from Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 271 (above 2.2.1), and Müller, *Offenbarung*, 54 (above 2.2.4). Stone, *Commentary*, 109, observes that this expression occurs in 4 Ezra "predominantly in eschatological contexts" and suggests that its function is to underscore that "these events will affect all of humanity rather than any inherent connotation of the expression...itself."

[34] Michel, "κατοικέω, οἰκουμένη," *TDNT*, 4:153-159.

[35] Michel, *TDNT*, 4:153-159.

potential for value judgment language – is more likely to be found in non-narrative forms of literature. Since the majority of the text of Revelation is non-narrative, special attention will be given to the appearance of these terms in the Psalms and prophetic literature of the LXX.

It appears as though the early Penteuchal use of the phrase יושבי הארץ[36] referred simply to those "who lived in the land" (i.e. Israel). In light of the frequency with which this idiom referred to the people of Canaan before the Israelite conquest, it seems reasonable to suggest that a negative sense was not far from the surface. However, the idiom began to take on an even more figurative and pejorative sense in the Psalms and prophetic writings. Evidence for this evolution of the phrase appears initially in Psalm 2, which serves as a paradigm of sorts for the rhetorical strategies of the Psalmists (see above, *Excursus Three*). It is noteworthy that while this phrase appears at important rhetorical junctures, it is completely absent from the two most detailed cycles of judgment (chapters 9 and 16) where several other idiomatic phrases (οἱ ἀνθρωποι and οἱ λοίποι) are used instead (see section 5.4 below).

5.3.3 Literary-Narrative Function of "the inhabitants of the earth"

Rev 3.10

The literary context of 3.10 is the commendation to the Christian community at Philadelphia for its perseverance in the face of hardship. This is done with the express purpose of validating their existence over against a group of opponents referred to only as "the synagogue of Satan" (3.8).[37] The author, obviously aware of difficult circumstances in which this community found itself, offers three promises of reassurance. Surprisingly, one of these is the promise that their vindication in the not-too-distant future will include the worship of *them* by these opponents (3.9).[38] Further, in 3.10 the church is promised

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[36] Num 14.14; Jos 7.9; Amos 9.5; Isa 42.10; Ezek 12.19; 33.24; Dan 4.35.

[37] The particular polemic reflected in this expression has been debated as to its anti-Semitic character. Bousset (*Offenbarung*, 227, cf. 208-209) is convincing when he argues that the author, as a Jewish Christian, sought to honour "true" Jewish identity while polemicizing certain opponents from the Jewish communities in Philadelphia and Smyrna. See also, Bauckham, *Theology*, 124, who compares this with similar polemic in 1QH 2.22; Mark R.J. Bredin, "The Synagogue of Satan Accusation in Revelation 2.9," *BTB* 28 (1998): 160-164; and, Aune, *Revelation*, 162-165.

[38] Cf. 1QM 19.6; 12.14-15. Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 133-137, convincingly argues that the author here takes Isa 60.14 as his primary source and conflates elements of Isa 49.23; 45.14 into this description of vindication

that they will be kept from "*the hour of trial which is coming upon the whole earth* (τὴν οἰκουμένην ὅλην) ...*to test the inhabitants of the earth* (τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς)." Finally, the author gives his readers a picture of their future existence – they will be made "*pillars in the temple of my God*" and they will be inscribed with several names including "*the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem which is coming down out of heaven*" (3.11). Although this description reveals the community to be weak, there is no word of censure; the motivational aim of the author is entirely comfort, hope and vindication.[39]

The importance of this passage to the present discussion may be seen in several ways. First, 3.10 presents the first instance in the Apocalypse of an idiom whose referent is humanity collectively.[40] Second, this identification of "the inhabitants of the earth" is further confirmed with the combination of a second collective idiom ("the whole earth"), which makes it apparent that whom the author has in mind includes everyone not found among the faithful community. Third, the author has in mind the eschatological Day of Judgment – or at least some form of the woes (here trial) it precipitates. Fourth, the final location for the vindication of this community is nothing less than the New Jerusalem itself (3.11).[41] Fifth, the use of traditional elements from Isa 60 and 49 mirrors the interpretive strategy in the climactic visionary sequence (21.22-26).[42] Finally, nowhere else in the visions is this kind of moment of "vindication of the saints" explained further. Thus, the literary context implies that, just as elsewhere in Revelation, this is a prolepsis of "the End" – a narrative point to which the author returns numerous times (cf. 1.7; 6.15-17; 11.15-18; 16.14-21; 19.17-21; 20.11-15; 21.9-22.5). If this is so (based on the

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for the faithful community. See also Beale, *Revelation*, 287-289, who adds Ps 86.9 as a traditional influence. In light of Bousset's identification of the author's thoroughly Jewish disposition (see previous footnote), both Beale and Aune (*Revelation*, 237-238) overemphasize the "irony" that here a largely Gentile Christian community is promised Israel's vindication.

[39] In this regard the churches of Philadelphia and Smyrna (2.8-11) are unlike the others who receive some form of censure.

[40] A case can be made that 1.7 also functions this way but there the phrase "the tribes of the earth" is not used again in the Apocalypse.

[41] The particularly close connection between the Philadelphian message and the vision of the New Jerusalem in Rev 21-22 was pointed out by, among others, Hemer, *Letters*, 167. *Contra* Hemer, however, compare also Tob 13.7-18 (see section 3.2 above).

[42] This important connection has implications for the discussion (below) on 21.24,26 and its place in the overall narrative trajectory of Revelation (i.e. what communicative relationship may be discerned between 3.9-10 and 21.24, 26.

narrative reading proposed in Chapter 4) then the author reveals something of how he envisions the Day of Judgment to unfold for "the inhabitants of the earth."

Rev 11.10-13

Two occurrences of this technical phrase are found in 11.10 as part of the author's description of the nature, effect and result of the missionary activity of the two witnesses. The impact of the mission of the two witnesses is felt globally and thus the reaction of people to them is described in those terms. There is no reason to suppose that the references to those who gloat over them (11.10), and see them resurrected (11.11), are not also to be associated with those who refused them burial (11.9) and whom the author then called "their enemies" (11.12; cf.11.5). In this short description the author has included at least 4 distinct yet obviously related idiomatic designations for the response of those on earth to the mission of the two witnesses. Therefore, the literary context of this entire section is decidedly negative. How this contributes to the overall narrative trajectory of Revelation is finally determined by the summary reference in 11.13 to οἱ λοίποι (see below).

5.4 Related Terms

5.4.1 Introduction

Apart from his two most common collective expressions for humanity (ἔθνος and οἱ κατοικοῦντες ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς), John also employs several other designations to a lesser degree: λαός; ἄνθρωπος; and οἱ λοίποι. Their relative infrequence suggests that the author's choice of designation may have been conditioned by either: patterns of pre-existent formulations (λαός); demand for a certain term based on thematic content or motifs (ἄνθρωπος); or, simply the logical demands of a certain literary construction (οἱ λοίποι). A brief review of these terms reveals their relative consistency with the observations made on the above categories.

5.4.2 λαός

In light of the use of λαός in the LXX to render עם (see comments on ἔθνος above), it is somewhat surprising to discover that John only employs it on two occasions apart from the four-fold formula (see *Excursus Two*). These two instances (18.4; 21.3)

both come in the form of a heavenly audition – one a word of warning to the people of God (18.3; cf. Jer 51.45); the other a promise of eschatological security and divine presence (21.3; cf. Ezek 37.26b-27; Lev 26.11-12).[43] This creates a situation where the term λαός is used only in formulaic settings in the Apocalypse – the author never uses it as a descriptive term in any other manner. Moreover, it is significant that in only one instance where the people of God are referred to or addressed by this λαός (7.9), is it the author who so describes them (and here it seems clearly to be parallel to 5.9 where the identical description is sung by the four living creatures and the 24 elders). These observations lead us to conclude that while λαός was a term of significant meaning for the author, it was not a favoured one and only appears in contexts "pre-determined" either by a formula or biblical traditions.

Twice the use of λαός obviously denoted the faithful community (on 5.9; 7.9, see above). The language of 18.4 "*Come out from her <u>my people</u>*" (Ἐξέλθατε ὁ λαός μου ἐξ αὐτῆς) will be considered here briefly as a counterpart to the discussion of 21.3 below. Like many of the symbols and motifs found in 17.1-22.5, a formulaic use of λαός appears in each of the contrasting "city visions" (on this contrast, see especially below on "the kings of the earth"). The vision of city Babylon (17.1-19.10) illustrates both her thoroughly immoral and demonically-inspired character (18.2: "a haunt of demons, every unclean thing"), as well as her certain judgment (18.8,10: "in one day/hour..."). However, convinced that the true nature and ultimate fate of Rome looked very different from present appearances, John urges separation from her influences by the Christian communities.[44] To accomplish this he draws on the *rhetorical* force of Jer 51.45 with its call for separation and distinction. In this particular setting, עם / λαός could not function more narrowly (for a fuller treatment of the interpretive tradition of Jer 51 in Rev 18, see below on "the kings of the earth"). Thus the warning to "come out" in 18.4 serves as antithesis to the welcoming language of 21.3 (see below).

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[43] This second instance is evaluated in greater detail in the section below, therefore we reserve judgment here as to whether 21.3 represents a promise to the people of God (so most commentators) or whether in fact, it envisions universal enjoyment of this promise by all earth's peoples (so Bauckham, Sweet, Caird)

[44] L.T. Stuckenbruck, "Revelation: Historical Setting and John's Call to Discipleship," *Leaven* 8/1 (2000): 27-31, who demonstrates that this crisis of faith generally makes best sense of the urgent language in Revelation *contra* older theories of widespread persecution. See also, Thompson, *Revelation*, chap.'s 6-7 (95-132).

5.4.3 ἄνθρωπος

The term ἄνθρωπος is used as a general reference to humanity; virtually every case reflects the unregenerate condition of humanity apart from, or overtly set against, God (8.11; 9.6,10,15,18,20; 13.13; 16.2,8,9,18,21) and his people (9.4; 14.4). Commentators have frequently noted that all but one instance of this term appear in two clusters (on both occasions in the build-up of a seven-cycle judgment series: the trumpet judgments in 8.6-9.21, and the bowl judgments in 16.1-21). The only exception to this generally negative use occurs in the vision of the new heaven and new earth (21.3). The importance of this exception to the questions presented in this study, however, cannot be overestimated. While virtually no commentators take particular notice of ἄνθρωπος here, for some this signals the author's ultimately universal perspective regarding the participation of previously hostile humanity in the final eschatological state.[45] Indeed, for Bauckham, the insertion of ἄνθρωπος here clinches his view that John has cast aside all exclusionary boundaries from the people of God.[46]

Rev 21.3

The use of the term ἄνθρωπος in 21.3 is distinctive for two reasons: first, as we have noted, its general use either implies or explicitly portrays humanity as unredeemed in Revelation;[47] and, secondly, the biblical traditions which the author brings together here in his description of the New Jerusalem do not provide a direct lexical antecedent. In keeping with the working assumptions of this study, the function of the phrase "*the dwelling of God is with humanity*" (ἡ σκηνὴ τοῦ θεοῦ μετὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων) is best understood in light of both its role in the narrative trajectory of the Apocalypse, and its particular appropriation of biblical traditions. To begin, the literary and cosmological implications of "*a new heaven and a new earth*" (οὐρανὸν καινὸν καὶ γῆν καινήν – 21.1a) in the author's symbolic universe must be taken seriously. While the exact

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[45] Roloff, *Revelation*, 236.

[46] See Bauckham, *Climax*, 310-313, who claims "We should take τῶν ἀνθρώπων to mean, not just (some) human beings as opposed to angels or animals, but the human race. It is this universalistic sense which it commonly carries in Revelation's usage...In its combination of the language of God's commitment to his covenant people with the most universalistic reference to all humanity, this verse is programmatic for the whole account of the New Jerusalem that follows." Caird, *Revelation*, 263-264, and Sweet, *Revelation*, 298, do not make much of the use of ἄνθρωπος here, focusing rather on the significance of σκηνή as a rendering of the Hebrew שכנה (*Shekinah*).

[47] Mathewson, *New Heaven*, 51.

meaning of this element of the vision has been the subject of much debate,[48] its effect on everything that follows should not be underestimated. This is true also for the language with which John crafts his re-interpretation of the covenantal promise traditions. Thus, his ability to speak of God dwelling among humanity stems from the fact that his visions of the eschatological future include a completely new heaven and earth.[49] In this new heaven and earth, the moral categories by which the author has previously defined the people of God over against humanity (or "the inhabitants of the earth") are now fully realized and operational (21.7-8). On both sides of 21.3, elements of the literary context determine how this text fits into the overall narrative trajectory of the document. The result is that the term ἄνθρωπος is freed from its previous associations in Revelation in this final instance.

Secondly, it is evident that ἄνθρωπος is intentionally inserted into John's reworking of covenantal promise traditions (Ezek 37.26b-27; Lev.26.11-12).[50] Specifically, those traditions in which Israel is promised God's presence among them (in some cases the eschatological future) have been adapted to reflect the anticipated future of the people of God in the New Jerusalem. In each source,[51] the original context of the tradition employs pronouns that were understood to refer to Israel as the people of God.

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[48] The primary issue in this regard is whether the author envisions a re-created or restored order, or an entirely new creation. On this the majority of commentators opt for the latter option but with no firm consensus. See Mathewson, *New Heaven*, 32-39, for a detailed review of the discussion and analysis of the text. Here I side with Mathewson who, following A. Vögtle (*Das Neue Testament und die Zukunft des Kosmos* [Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1970], 115-119), notices a pattern of "elimination of all that is opposed to the establishment of God's universal kingdom." Further he argues "the removal of the first heaven and earth (20.11) is a prerequisite for the establishment of the new heaven and the new earth in 21.1." Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 226-227, speaks of visions of removal (16.19-19.5; 19.10-21; 20.1-3,7-10; 20.11; 20.14) and a vision of renewal (21.1-22.5).

[49] This direct connection between the language of the audition (21.3-4) and the setting of the vision (21.1-2) does not appear to have been noticed by commentators.

[50] Most commentators recognize both of these texts as the predominant traditional sources for 21.3, although they opt in the first place for Ezek 37.27. Bauckham, *Climax*, 310-313, and Aune, *Revelation*, 1122-1123, rightly include Zech 2.10-11a (MT 2.14-15a). Aune's further suggestions regarding covenantal formulas in Exod 29.45; Jer 31.33; Ps 95.7 (cf. *T. Mos.* 4.2; 11QTemple 59.13) pose serious difficulties for Bauckham's universalistic proposal. Rissi, *Future*, 57, suggested Lev 26.11-12 as the primary source for 21.3. Mathewson, *New Heaven*, 51-53, however, argues principally for Ezek 37.26b-27 and against Lev 26.11-12 on the grounds that its pronouns are 2nd singular rather than 3rd singular (Ezek 37; Rev 21), and that the context in Ezekiel is eschatological whereas the context in Leviticus is not. He then proposes no less than eight further possibilities of OT texts that reflect this covenantal formula (Jer 30.22; 31.1; 31.33; 32.38; Ezek 36.28; 37.23; 43.7,9; Zech 8.3,8). Beale, *Revelation*, 1046-1047, notes the conceptual parallel in *Jub.* 1.17,29.

[51] Ezek 37.27 "I will (make) my home among them" (משכני עליהם והייתי להם); Lev.26.11 "I will set my dwelling place in your midst" (ונתתי משכני בתוככם).

By replacing these pronouns with the term ἄνθρωπος, the author of Revelation intentionally subverts its otherwise thoroughly pejorative sense. However, is this done in order to underscore a belief in the universal participation of all humanity in the final eschatological conditions (so Bauckham)? Or does this term appear here in a way that appropriates the eschatological hopes found in the HB for faithful Christian communities?

One further traditional source is helpful: Zech 2.10-11a [MT 2.14-15a] "*I will come and dwell in your midst*" (הנני־בא ושכנתי בתוכך); and, "*Many nations* [LXX ἔθνος] *will join (themselves) to the Lord in that day and will become my people* [LXX λαός] *and I will dwell in your midst*" (ונלוו גוים רבים אל־יהוה ביום ההוא והיו לי לעם ושכנתי בתוכך). This text provides the author of Revelation with the precedent of "many nations" for his use of the plural λαοί.[52] While Bauckham is right to point out that the plural use of λαός coincides with other uses of it in the four-fold formula (cf.17.15),[53] the point seems precisely to be that in each of those cases, it either stands for the community of believers (5.9; 7.9) or functions as an intentional foil and inverted parallel between the two cities – Babylon and the New Jerusalem. The text from Zechariah also does not necessarily provide a broadly universal point of reference for the author of Revelation since, in fairness, such a multiplicity of nations could simply affirm his understanding of the trans-national character of the Christian communities (5.9; 7.9, see above). Identification of potential conceptual and/or linguistic parallels between biblical traditions and the language of the Apocalypse are bound both by immediate literary signals and the larger narrative trajectory to which they contribute.

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[52] So Aune, *Revelation*, 1123; Mathewson, *New Heaven*, 52-53 and Prigent, *Commentary*, 596, all note that although the manuscript evidence is not clear that the plural form λάοι is original, it is likely intentional here because scribes (with OT references in mind which were singular) would have naturally assumed singular not plural. Sweet, *Revelation*, 298, attempts to harmonize this language with references elsewhere to humanity, and argues that this plural form recalls "the diversity of peoples witnessed to by the church (10.11; 11.9) – and deceived by the beasts (13.6) – which is confirmed by the exposition at vv.24ff." This is also essentially the argument of Bauckham (see above, fn.23). Neither commentator, however, has seriously considered the implications of the literary context and narrative trajectory within which the author appropriates these biblical traditions at 21.3. When compared with the interpretive strategies at work in early Jewish apocalyptic thought (see Chapter 3), the author of Revelation here appears very much to employ the same type of qualifying characteristics.

[53] Bauckham, *Climax*, 335-336.

In the final analysis, it is fair to say that the language of 21.3 is optimistic and reflects broadly inclusive biblical traditions. At the same time, by the very use of terms (ἄνθρωπος and λαός), which elsewhere serve either a negative rhetorical function or a well-defined circumlocution for the faithful community, one must be especially sensitive to the possibility that qualifying contextual signals are present. Based on the previous analysis, this is precisely what we find in 21.3.

5.4.4 οἱ λοίποι

On three occasions in visionary scenes where the author depicts the activities of certain players in the eschatological drama, he refers to οἱ λοίποι ("the rest, the remaining ones") in an all-encompassing, collective sense (9.20-21; 11.13; 19.21).[54] Significantly, in each case the narrative setting appears to promote an entirely negative view of those whom the author has in mind as remaining. The reason for saying that the narrative setting *appears* to promote such a view is that in one instance (11.13) there is enough ambiguity to warrant further attention. By setting these three instances alongside one another, however, the negative predisposition in communicative agenda of the author signalled by this idiom becomes apparent.

Rev 9.20-21

In the culminating moments of the visionary judgment series of the seven trumpets (8.6-9.21; 11.14-19), the sixth trumpet (9.13-21) signals the destruction of one third of humanity. The response of "the rest" of humanity to the cycle of judgments is described in terms of their unrepentant posture.[55] They continue to practice idolatry ("[*they*] *did not repent of the works of their hands*") and engage in immoral activity ("*nor did they repent of their murders, nor their magic arts, nor their sexual sin, nor their*

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[54] One other instance (20.5) has no bearing on the present analysis because it neither reflects an eschatological judgment scene, nor takes as its referent a group actively opposed to God (here "the dead").

[55] Bauckham, *Climax*, 257-258,279, suggests that this emphasis on humanity's response to the trumpet plagues is evidence of an initially unsuccessful divine program designed to induce repentance but which finally has the desired effect in the ministry of the two witnesses (11.3-13). This seems improbable not only because no formal clues exist anywhere to suggest that repentance is the intent of the judgment cycles, but also in light of the direct appropriation of the "hardening" motif found in the Exodus traditions (Pharaoh's lack of repentance) from which these plague judgments owe their conceptual origin. On this see Aune, *Revelation*, 495-496,541, who observes "This repentance motif is a formal motif that has been derived by the author from the plague story in Exodus...where it is couched in such a way that there is no doubt that a change of mind on the part of the pharaoh of Egypt was never considered a real possibility." See also Beale, *Revelation*, 498, 517-519.

stealing"). The larger literary context makes clear that those whom the vision of the seven trumpets is concerned with are "the inhabitants of earth" – i.e those who were addressed with a warning by the eagle (8.13) and who are to be distinguished from the "sealed" people of God (9.4).

Rev 11.13

A second instance of the substantive οἱ λοίποι occurs in 11.13 where the global impact of the two witnesses is described (11.3-13). It is this passage, which for a few commentators has signalled a change in the author's perspective to a more universal understanding of humanity's response to God in the eschatological context.[56] Specifically, the language of "fearing God" has indicated some positive turning to God by those who survive the earthquake. The narrative similarities between 11.3-13 and 9.13-21, however, are significant both in terms of shared motifs and idioms that carry consistent connotations in the Apocalypse. First, it is critical to recall that the earlier descriptive label given to those affected by the two witnesses is "the inhabitants of the earth" (11.10; see section 5.3 above). This label alone carries connotations that appear to rule out a positive reading of the text;[57] one would need to make a very good case that this term was being subverted and reused here in an opposite way to all other instances by the author. Secondly, the author describes as part of the witnesses' ministry the ability to call down plague (πλήγη) with language reminiscent of the Exodus motifs employed in 8.6-9.21. Further, there is an important link between the reaction of those who see the witnesses raised from the dead (11.11 φόβος μέγας ἐπέπεσεν), and the response of those who survive the earthquake in fear (11.13 ἔμφοβοι ἐγένοντο). Finally, 11.12 describes those who saw them go up to heaven as "their enemies" (οἱ ἐχθροὶ αὐτῶν).

Rev 19.21

The scene in 19.17-21 depicting the capture of Satan and his demonic forces, as well as the destruction of "the kings of the earth" who join them, also uses the collective οἱ λοίποι to signal the fate of all those aligned against God ("*the rest of them were killed*"). Although this passage provides detail in naming / labelling the opponents of God

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[56] Bauckham, *Climax*, 273-283; Caird, *Revelation*, 139-140, who makes the mistake of assuming that the language of "homage" combined with "fear" means genuine worship. As we have seen, however, the language of worship alone does not necessarily demand conversion; in fact, in the evaluation of apocalyptic traditions in Chapter 3 (above), the opposite was true.

[57] This is a point which Bauckham himself makes (*Climax*, 241) but then seems to ignore.

(see the section below on "the kings of the earth"), it also suggests more generally that these antagonistic forces include "*all people, slave and free, small and great*" (19.18).[58] Here again, the substantive functions to collectively designate those who serve as a foil for the believing community -- they oppose, resist, and are destroyed by God.

In each case, this substantive οἱ λοίποι refers back either to the idiom "the inhabitants of the earth" (9.20-21; 11.13) or to the author's familiar description of humanity taken from every walk of life (19.17-21). Humanity, apart from the sealed community of believers, is consistently depicted as antagonistic toward God and ultimately doomed as a result. Moreover, in each case "the rest" are described as those who are left following a major eschatological disaster (plague, earthquake; battle). They are depicted variously in each of these instances as unrepentant (9.20-21), terrified and subservient (11.13), and ultimately, killed (19.21). The literary context of each, and the larger narrative trajectory to which they belong does not allow for a positively universal reading of these texts in any meaningful way.

5.5 "The Kings of the Earth"

5.5.1 Introduction

A recognition that political / economic critique plays an important part in the rhetorical agenda of the author of Revelation is well attested among commentators.[59] The stance of the Apocalypse toward the nations of the earth may be evaluated on the basis of the ways in which human rulers and corresponding political systems are depicted. This happens in several ways: (a) the phrase οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς – "the kings of the earth" (1.5; 6.15; 17.2,18; 18.3,9-10; 19.19; 21.24)[60] – is employed by the author as his

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[58] *Contra* Aune, *Revelation*, 1067, who suggests the antecedent for οἱ λοίποι to be the kings and their armies (19.19). While they are no doubt included among those who are killed by the sword of the warrior, the collective sense here points us back to the entire list of gathered opponents of God in 19.18.

[59] The most recent specifically focused treatment of this theme is J. Nelson Kraybill, *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse* (JSNTS 132: Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996). See also A. Yarbro-Collins, "The Political Perspective of the Revelation to John," *JBL* 96 (1977): 241-256; A. Yarbro-Collins, "Revelation 18:Taunt-Song or Dirge?" in *L'Apocalyptique*, 185-204; R. Bauckham, "The Economic Critique of Rome in Revelation 18," in *Climax*, 338-383; A. Callahan, "Apocalypse as Critique of Political Economy: Some Notes on Revelation 18," *HBT* 21 (1999): 46-65. This theme is often emphasized in liberation theology readings of the Apocalypse, see for instance, Catherine G. Gonzalez, and Justo L. Gonzalez, *Revelation* (Westminster Bible Companion; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997).

[60] This nom. form occurs in 6.15; 17.2; 18.3,9-10; 21.24, while 1.5 and 17.18 are gen., and 19.19 is acc..

predominant expression for human political leaders;[61] (b) in addition, the phrase οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς οἰκουμένης ὅλης – "the kings of the whole inhabited world" (16.14) – appears to carry the same symbolic value and rhetorical function (the question of whether its unique construction is of any significance will be examined below);[62] and (c) finally, several passages with non-qualified references to "kings" also appear to designate these same referents based on either their context and / or proximity to instances of the idiom in question (10.11; 17.12-14,16; 19.16,18). For this thesis, the significance of this idiom rests largely with the narrative tension the final instance (21.24) creates within the document. Moreover, together with the titular description of Christ (1.5) the evidence for varied appropriation of this designation requires further attention. On one hand, the author consistently uses this expression within the visionary material to designate those human agents most visibly and powerfully antagonistic toward God and his purposes.[63] On the other hand, however, at least twice this phrase appears to operate entirely outside any negative polemical agenda. These two texts (1.5 and 21.24) break with the otherwise uniform application of this idiom and require analysis both individually and in terms of their possible relationship within the document's narrative trajectory. What emerges will influence our understanding of how the author envisions the fate of the nations.

Earlier, Chapter 2 documented the lack of agreement among scholars regarding a coherent reading of the key texts that employ this idiom in apparently conflicting ways. The method of critical analysis adopted here demands two distinct tasks. First, the point of departure is to evaluate each relevant text in both its immediate literary context and against the background of the overall narrative trajectory of Revelation. This presupposes that each instance of this idiom plays an important part in the author's overall rhetorical intent, and that collectively they provide the narrative logic within which each individual

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[61] This identification, while virtually unchallenged (with possibly the exception of 1.5 and 21.24, see below), has been expanded by some commentators to include demonic powers – particularly those which might be imagined to influence human political rulers and systems (see especially Beale, *Revelation*, 191; Roloff, *Revelation*, 25). While there is unquestionably interplay between demonic forces and human political agents as joint opponents of God and his people within the cosmology of Revelation (cf. 13.1-8,11-18; 16.12-14,16; 19.19-21; 20.3,8-10), a definite distinction appears to be maintained by the author both in terms of judgment and responsibility. For a fuller evaluation of this see the treatment of 16.14 and 19.18-19 below.

[62] Further, the phrase βασιλεὺς βασιλέων (17.14; 19.16) appears to serve as formulaic shorthand for ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς and will be evaluated both in connection with 1.5 and in its two narrative locations in the text of Revelation.

[63] See especially Aune, *Revelation*, 40.

instance is best understood. Secondly, an investigation into the potential influence of traditional sources upon the author's use of this idiom will be made. Symbolic imagery, prophetic discourse, and broader conceptual categories are taken into account not only within the text of Revelation but also, by comparison, from those witnesses within early Jewish apocalyptic and later Targumic literature which represent a common interpretive stream. Thus, an exploration of the interpretive possibilities stemming from these traditional sources, and how they might contribute to the conceptual range of this idiomatic phrase in Revelation, can provide fruitful analysis. Further, the possibilities that more than one traditional stream and / or the variegated appropriation of a traditional source inform the use of this phrase must also be investigated.[64] If the presence of more than one traditional source – or indeed the exegetical merging of such sources by the author – can be demonstrated; then the likelihood that this symbol could operate in a multivalent fashion would increase greatly. Might a case be made that a wider analogical (or programmatic) usage of "the kings of the earth" beyond its common pejorative sense exists within the author's symbolic universe?

Finally, it is not only crucial to determine what kind of tradition is represented in a given text, but also whether that tradition's contextual factors determine the range of possibilities for its interpretation in a 'new' setting.[65] One may, however, inquire further whether a given source of this phrase has actually provided not only an immediate definition but also the rhetorical platform for the author of Revelation. The possibility must also be acknowledged that the author of a later work (such as Revelation) may *not* share the concerns of an older tradition / source and thus employs an idiomatic phrase

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[64] Aune, *Revelation*, 40, classifies all instances of this phrase as belying a negative stance toward the political rulers and mighty of the world while Beale, *Revelation*, 191, admits in advance that the use of this label in 21.24 may suggest some form of broad conversion. Most commentators make observations in both directions – that the phrase is predominantly negative, and that 21.24 (and for some, 1.5) presents a broader frame of reference.

[65] Bauckham, *Climax*, 371-372, with direct reference to this idiomatic phrase suggests, "this phrase itself is determined by its scriptural sources." Such a claim can only be substantiated if the evidence from the larger interpretive milieu within which Revelation stands, bears it out. In what follows, the argument will be made that, indeed, John's use of this idiomatic phrase has its linguistic and conceptual roots in OT traditions, but that its function in his symbolic world represents a distinct interpretive shift in rhetoric. As such, this idiom in Revelation exhibits more direct similarities to the tendencies of apocalyptic interpretive strategies than with its respective OT sources.

with creative license.[66] In the majority of cases "the kings of the earth" functions as a stock apocalyptic phrase with pejorative connotations. However, the two instances cited above demand a broader range of meaning. Coming to terms with how the idiomatic phrase οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς functioned in the symbolic world of the author of Revelation, and further what images it was intended to evoke for his readers, rests on several areas of inquiry: (1) its role in OT traditions that are taken up in Revelation; (2) its subsequent conventional use in apocalyptic writings; (3) its contribution to the use in Revelation of the larger βασιλεὺς / βασιλεία / βασιλεύω word group; (4) its rhetorical function in the narrative development of Revelation; and, (5) evaluation of the individual instances of this phrase in Revelation.

5.5.2 "The Kings of the Earth" in Biblical Traditions

The conceptual background for the phrase "the kings of the earth" is well established in the Hebrew Bible. One of the fundamental difficulties in an evaluation of this phrase (and similarly "the inhabitants of the earth," see below) lies with the broad semantic range of the Hebrew term אֶרֶץ[67] and its Greek equivalent γῆ.[68] The evidence from writings depicting the history of Israel suggests an evolution of the idiom that spanned several spheres of reference.[69] Thus, present in Israel's narrative history, the Psalter, and the prophetic writings, the phrase כל־מלכי ארץ / מלכי־הארץ (and its

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[66] Fekkes *Isaiah*, 57-58, suggests that John "not only takes up *where* the Prophets left off – he also takes over *what* they left behind. He is not only part of a prophetic circle, but stands in a prophetic continuum which carries on and brings to final revelation the living words of God to the care of the brotherhood (10.7)" (italics his). See also Bauckham, *Theology*, 4-5.

[67] J. Bergman & M. Ottosson, "אֶרֶץ," *TDOT* 1: 388-405. Their discussion documents the difficulty of determining the term's referent in certain situations (393-397).

[68] H. Sasse, "γῆ, ἐπίγειος," *TDNT* 1:677-681, who suggests three trajectories of meaning for this term: (1) earth, land as the dwelling-place of man, (2) earth as part of the world (κόσμος) along with heaven (οὐρανός) and sea (θάλασσα); (3) earth in its relation to God. It is only the first category with which the idiom in question is concerned in two main directions. As this term is bound up with the two phrases being examined in this study, both the meanings "land" (i.e. Judah / Palestine) and "earth" (i.e. inhabited world) occur frequently and represent legitimate translational options. See also BAGD, "γῆ," 157.

[69] Dale Patrick, "The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament," in *The Kingdom of God in 20th Century Interpretation* (Wendell Willis, ed.; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 72-73, notes the dual / multivalent function of such terminology. He describes these as independent traditions (i.e. nationalistic / universal) which tended to interact but had not been fully synthesized by the close of the OT canon.

equivalents)[70] is used in several distinct ways. The earliest and most narrow use of the term reflects concerns related to subjugation of the land of Canaan in the Deuteronomistic period (Josh12.1, 7).[71] Here "the kings of the land" refers to the rulers of indigenous peoples driven out as part of the resettlement program of the Israelite nation following their slavery in Egypt and wilderness existence (cf. Num 13.1-14.9; Josh 3.7-11; Judg 5.3,19). At several points in the Psalter, the rehearsal of this theme of dominion over rulers and their peoples during the conquest of Canaan reflects this narrower meaning. These texts, while not employing the full idiom, nevertheless unmistakably represent this tradition (Ps 135.10-12 [134.10-12]; 136.17-22 [135.17-22] cf. 68.13-18 [67.13-18]; 78.55 [77.55]).[72] A related instance occurs during the rehearsal of Israel's history by Ezra as part of the national confession during the post-exilic rebuilding of Jerusalem (Neh 9.22-25). In each of these instances, the kings and kingdoms 'given' to Israel in their military conquest of Canaan are the 'historical' referent. It comes as no surprise then in light of its significance in the social memory of Israel that this phrase with its image of conquest continued to function meaningfully in the prayers, hymnody and prophetic oracles of the Israelite nation as they anticipated God's future activity of vindication.

A broader application of the designation מלכי־הארץ may be associated with the emerging monarchy of ancient Israel; most notably with the height of the Solomonic era and its influence upon the surrounding nations and their rulers (1 Kgs 10.23-24; 2 Chr

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[70] Several Hebrew terms are used for the concept of "king / ruler / prince" (references given here reflect only those occasions when the terms refer to foreign political leaders outside of Israel): (1) שפטי ארץ ("judges, kings of the earth" – Ps 2.10; 148.11; Isa 40.23); (2) רוזנים ("rulers, potentates" – Ps 2.2); (3) מגני־ארץ מאד ("shield, defense" used figuratively of 'king' – Ps 47.10); (4) נדיבי עמים ("nobles, rulers, princes" – Ps 47.10; Isa 13.2); (5) קצין ("chief, ruler, commander in war" – Isa 1.10; 22.3); (6) נגיד ("ruler, prince, captain, chief officer" – 2 Chron 11.11; Ps 76.13; Isa 55.4); (7) כל עתודי ארץ ("male-goat" used figuratively of princes and chief men – Isa 14.9). Further, terms such as שר ("ruler / commander / captain") and the Aramaic סגן ("governor / prefect" – only four times in Daniel) appear to denote a secondary level of administrative leaders or client-kings serving under a dominant ruler.

[71] Josh 12.1-24 records the names and territories of 33 "kings" who were defeated by Moses (2) and Joshua (31). The most notable names that reappear in these traditions are Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan.

[72] An even older precursor to this tradition appears in Israel's recollection of the early wanderings of the patriarchs in Ps 105.11-14 (cf. 1 Chr 16.18-21).

9.22-26).[73] In these instances, the narrative agenda does not necessarily invest the idiom with negative or pejorative connotations. What does emerge as the central concern of those narratives is the exalted status of Solomon (and Israel) among the surrounding nations. Thus, this tradition serves to illustrate the superiority, pre-eminence and glory of the Davidic line during Solomon's reign (cf. 1 Kgs 4.20-21,24,34 [MT and LXX 5.14]).[74] In this depiction of Israelite political strength at its zenith, all other kings and empires assume a subordinate and subservient position.[75] These traditions reflect the belief that the reign of Solomon at its height represented the fulfilment of God's promises to David (2 Sam 7.8-16; 1 Chr 17.7-14). As a result of Solomon's ultimate failure,[76] these traditions became expressions of future hope for the Israelite nation and restoration of the Davidic line (Ps 72.8-11 [71.8-11]; 89.27 [88.28]). With the eventual disintegration of Solomon's kingdom, these traditions evolved into a network of "idyllic symbols," which could readily be applied to messianic expectations.

Such a use of this phrase also appears elsewhere in the HB with positive reference to certain Gentile kings by assigning them the title "ruler of the kings of the earth." These kings were assumed to hold the place of pre-eminence among the world's rulers as a result either of God's blessing of them and/or punishment of his own people. This sense of worldwide recognition and acknowledgment of a foreign sovereign by both Israel and the Gentile nations formed part of the rhetorical rationale in prophetic writings for Israel's own subjection to them. In particular this is true of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (Dan 2.37,47; 3.2; 4.37)[77] and Cyrus of Persia (Isa 45.1).[78] One may suggest then that this

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[73] The LXX omits "τῆς γῆς" by simply not translating הָאָרֶץ from the MT in 2 Chr 9.22, most likely in light of the fact that the entire phrase οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς appears in the next verse (2 Chr 9.23).

[74] The significance of 1 Kgs 4.34 [MT and LXX 5.14] should not be underestimated in light of the inclusion in the Greek translation of ἐλάμβανεν δῶρα παρὰ πάντων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς. This may well represent an important link to the tradition being appropriated in Revelation 21.24 and will be considered further in the discussion below. For the use of the construction λαμβάνω + παρά as the receiving or accepting of taxes or tribute, see BAGD, 464.

[75] A similar rhetorical function might also be argued for in the traditions reflecting Solomon's wisdom (1 Kgs 3.28; 5.7,12; 10.1-9; 2 Chr 9.1-8,23) and his powerful economic / trade program (1 Kgs 10.14-29; 2 Chr 1.14-17; 9.13-28). One can see that these traditions taken together function as a way of validating and idealizing this period in Israel's political history.

[76] For the Chronicler's account of Solomon's rise to prominence and the promises and warnings of God to him see 2 Chr 1.12; 7.17-22 (cf. 1 Kgs 11.1-42 which appears to be inserted in the parallel narrative between 2 Chr 9.29,30).

[77] The textual data for this phrase in the various manuscripts of Daniel is as follows: 2.37,47 in MT, LXX, and Theod.; 3.2 in LXX only; 4.37 in MT and LXX.

[78] This phrase also occurs in the description of Alexander in 1 Macc 1.2.

use of the idiomatic "the kings of the earth" presents the possibility of universal scope without necessarily negative or positive connotations regarding the nations of the world and their political leaders. In this sense the primary issue is simply that of a given king's pre-eminent status and nations' subservience to his ultimate authority. The implications of such a possibility for a reading of the several instances of this phrase in Revelation are important.

A third stage of this expression's use – reflecting the failure of Israel's monarchy and the nation's subsequent exile – seeks to rationalize this turn of events by affirming two closely related themes: the sovereignty of Israel's God as king over all the kingdoms of the world, and the future vindication of Israel as his people through the exaltation of an ideal Davidic king as God's earthly representative.[79] The application of this idiom to these hopes assumes some form of resistance or rebellion on the part of the nations of the world and their rulers. This developing tradition is most prevalent in the Psalter and takes the form of predominantly eschatological hopes in the later prophets.[80] This idiom, as it employs the linguistic imagery associated with the monarchic paradigm of Israel's history, represented an idealized belief about God's cosmological position in the present. While these hopes were held to be true in Israel's contemporary setting as theological belief, they were also largely unfulfilled.[81] This facilitated their ready appropriation in apocalyptic writings with a view to final, eschatological realization and vindication. Final vindication, of both Israel as a nation and her God as god of all creation, is the primary concern of this language. The actual implications for the nations of the world and their rulers are not insignificant but, nevertheless, secondary. While this application of the term assumed a primarily pejorative perspective of the nations of the world and their rulers – and it is this sense, which prophetic and apocalyptic traditions most readily

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[79] Two studies in particular describe this evolving tradition: John Gray, *The Biblical Doctrine of the Reign of God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979), and J.H. Eaton, *Kingship in the Psalms*, (SBT 2:32; London: SCM Press, 1976).

[80] Scholars have debated the classification of individual Psalms since the form-critical categories proposed by Gunkel. As they relate to the discussion below, "royal" psalms in general and "dynastic" psalms in particular will be evaluated for their possible influence on Revelation and similar eschatological statements in deutero- and trito- Isaiah.

[81] Generally, see the comments by Craigie on this re-orientation of ancient Judaism (cited above, *Excursus Three*).

employed (see below) – it does not function exclusively in this manner. Contextual analysis is required to determine the rhetorical function of individual texts.

With these factors in mind, one may evaluate those traditions which assert the dominion of God in the face of the apparent rebellion or disinterest of the nations of the earth as represented and mediated by their "kings" (cf. *Excursus Three*, above). Here biblical authors were not concerned with the subjugation of a particular land or the recognition of Israel's monarchy in a strictly political sense. Rather, they proleptically anticipated the appropriate posture and response of all the world's kingdoms to the God of Israel as king over all (cf. Ps 2.1-2,9-10; 47.3-9 [46.3-9]; 68.30-33 [67.30-33]; 102.15 [101.16]; 138.4-5 [137.4-5]; 148.7-14; Isa 14.9; 24.21; 40.22-23; 49.23; Ezek 27.33).[82] Therefore, this tradition envisions political subjugation of, and reverential deference by, these representative rulers as the means to a religious (theological) end: that Israel's God receive rightful honour and recognition from all peoples of the world. An important corollary for the present study is that in these settings that act of worship by the nations, while holding the possibility of being linked with genuine conversion, does not assume or require it. Reading this tradition against the complex of eschatological traditions in early Judaism demands that a range of possibilities be held open.[83]

What emerges from this classification of the מלכי־האדמה traditions in the Hebrew Bible suggests two conclusions: (1) the first stage of usage clearly has no direct bearing on the exegetical interests of the author of Revelation, while the third clearly does;[84] and (2) there may be room for an evaluation of at least some of the occurrences of the idiom "the kings of the earth" in Revelation in light of the second stage of its use – one not normally considered seminal for an understanding of this term in Revelation.[85] If

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[82] One recognizes immediately the predominant influence of Ps 2 not only in light of the number of allusions to it in the text of Revelation, but especially in light of the dual attack upon Yahweh and משיחו "his Christ". This dual identification of God and a messianic agent (i.e. "the Lamb") occurs frequently in Revelation (5.13; 6.16; 7.10,17; 14.4b,10; 21.22,23; 22.1,3) and its unique formula has often been subject to the charge of redactional insertion based on a Christological agenda.

[83] This is the main thrust of the conclusions arrived at by the comparative sampling of eschatological traditions found within early Jewish literature (see Chapter 2 above).

[84] The general consensus among commentators of Revelation in favour of the third option as the "default" setting of this expression for John, and apocalypticists generally, bears this out.

[85] How these three phases of the traditional usage of this phrase may be linked to one another in the presentation of Israel's history in the HB is instructive. The initially antagonistic use of the phrase to referring to enemy peoples (in a particular "land") gives way to the more positive reflection of Israel's place among the nations ("earth") during the reigns of David and Solomon. One may suggest preliminarily

more than one traditional application of this phrase may be shown to be at work in Revelation, then the question of their conceptual inter-relatedness is crucial, as well as a determination of which traditional and symbolic uses appear to inform each respective instance of this phrase.

5.5.3 Apocalyptic Convention and Political Polemic

Important comparisons may be made with the way this phrase and its semantically linked idioms functioned in Jewish apocalyptic literature. The phrase "the kings of the earth" occurs relatively infrequently in the literature – with the significant exception of the Enochic *Similitudes* documented earlier in this study.[86] Significantly, however, this in no way implies that rhetoric directed against political leaders and systems was absent in other apocalyptic writings. Instead, this idiom is reflected in the broadly conceived category of the "mighty / powerful" on earth who are polemicized on several grounds: (1) they represent political rulers and systems which have persecuted a religious minority (Jewish or Christian); (2) they embody economic policy which both leads to excessive luxury and neglect of the poor; and, (3) they generically represent the general disparity of status and honour in the ancient world between societal classes. Even in the absence of widespread use of "the kings of the earth" in apocalypses other than Revelation and the *Similitudes*, the language of "kings" and "kingdoms" is nevertheless a common epithet in their rhetoric of judgment. What one may suggest is that the net of culpability may have been cast somewhat more widely in most apocalyptic visions wherein labels such as "the nations" or "the inhabitants of the earth" are more frequently utilized.[87]

"The kings of the earth" does occur in 4 Ezra 15.20-21, and assumes all the hallmarks of apocalyptic usage described above. As part of a polemic against the "plots of unbelievers" (cf. 4 Ezra 15.1-4) the following words are attributed to God: "*I call*

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that as the prospects of a self-governing land became more remote for the exilic and post-exilic Jewish communities, the second stage this expression's development – and with it an increasingly hostile, pejorative sense – came to reflect common usage. Positive uses of this idiom were then reserved for the future age.

[86] The cluster of usage of this phrase in *1 En.* 37-71 (48.8-10; 62.1,3,6,9; 63.12) suggests that the *Similitudes* and Revelation exhibit some conceptual relationship. Such potential links between these documents regarding the use of common traditions and literary conventions will be explored where applicable in the analysis of Revelation that follows.

[87] These idiomatic symbols are evaluated below.

together all the kings of the earth to fear me...to turn and repay what they have given them. Just as they have done to my chosen people until this day, so I will do, and will repay into their bosom". This part of 4 Ezra, however, exhibits the hallmarks of a later Christian addition to the text. Its usefulness as a contemporary witness to the traditions represented in the *Similitudes* and Revelation is therefore doubtful, and its linguistic affinities to Revelation are likely evidence of the influence of the latter upon it.[88]

5.5.4 Linguistic Field of Reference in Revelation

The way in which this phrase and its intended symbolic value functions as part of the βασιλ– word group in Revelation must also be evaluated. Beyond the depiction of human political rulers, this word group is employed first in the author's description of the Christian communities. They constitute a "kingdom" (1.6; 5.10 – βασιλείαν), and function as partners in God's activity of "reigning / ruling" (5.10; 20.6 – βασιλεύσουσιν).[89] Second, this word group is employed to portray the definitive expression of the rule of God (and Christ) over all peoples and over all creation (11.15-18; 15.3-4; 17.14; 19.12,16). Third, the author's interest in describing the internal politics of the Roman Empire – its succession of emperors and political alliances (17.8-18) – also necessitates the use of this word group.

One may suggest preliminarily that this range of word usage leaves open the possibility of more than one symbolic value for this idiom. The first (1.5) and final (21.24) uses of this phrase may be construed as more affirmative of the "kings of the earth" than those in the rest of the visions which carry decidedly negative polemic. Beyond this language describing earthly kings (and, by implication, their kingdoms) at least two other uses of this type of language in Revelation require precision: first, the theme of God as king over creation and cosmos – ultimately a spatial category which finally has complete effect temporally with the eschatological future; and secondly, the

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[88] The text of 4 Ezra is actually the conflation of two (or three) different documents: (1) chs. 1-2 function as a "Christian" introduction; (2) chs. 3-14 represent the older form of the book: a Jewish apocalypse; and, (3) chs. 15-16 are a further "Christian" appendix to the main document. See Chapter 3 below on 4 Ezra, and also Metzger, "Fourth Book," 517-518.

[89] See also 2.26-27, which employs different language in light of its dependence upon Ps 2.9 (LXX ποιμαίνω – to rule, shepherd [MT רעע – to break]) but contextually – and in light of this prevalent motif throughout Revelation – reflects the same conceptual reality as the other texts cited above.

fact that the believing Christian community is described in terms which reflect not kingly status (*contra* Schüssler Fiorenza, see below) but the hallmarks of a kingdom / kingship ruled by God.

5.5.5 Literary-Narrative Function of "the kings of the earth"

The importance of the phrase "the kings of the earth" in the overall narrative scheme of Revelation is underscored not only by its early introduction (1.5), but perhaps more importantly in light of the fact that this text employs it as part of a series of descriptive modifiers of the document's central character: the exalted Christ.[90] In fact, every instance of this phrase links these human rulers with some claim to ultimate authority – either that of God and Christ (1.5; 6.15; 16.12-16; 17.14; 19.15-19; 21.24), or that of Babylon (17.2,18; 18.3,9). Two distinct yet related tendencies emerge by which this group is characterized: (1) they are unquestionably (in the mind of the author) subject to the rulership and judgment of God as Creator of all; and, (2) they invariably appear to align themselves with the forces of evil which antagonize God, his people, and his purposes in creation, thereby sealing their fate as one of doom. Does this second characteristic necessarily predetermine the rhetorical slant of the first? Or might the first be able to function in a multi-valent manner, whereby it does not necessarily demand a negative or pejorative understanding? In the case of the former option, every instance of the phrase "the kings of the earth" would refer explicitly to a group of human political leaders for whom the reader may assume a final negative end.[91] However, if the latter alternative is preferred (and this is the one adopted by the present study), then the overall narrative function of this phrase is the broader affirmation of the scope and recognition of

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[90] The role of Christ as both the source and the content of the visionary material in Revelation is first asserted in the document's title. This may be seen further from his physical description (1.12-20), his authoritative voice in the Christian communities (2.1-3.22), his central role as the agent who enacts God's cosmic purposes (5.6-14), and his definitive role as the Divine Warrior who defeats all antagonistic opponents of God (17.12-14; 19.11-21). For detailed studies of the Christology of John's Apocalypse see Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*; Loren Johns, *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John*, (WUNT 2/167; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000); and, Mattias Hoffmann, *Angelomorphic Christology in the Book of Revelation* (PhD Thesis; University of Durham, 2003).

[91] Commentators who take this view include: Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 188; Aune, *Revelation*, 40; Charles, *Revelation*, 1:181. Prigent, *Commentary*, 103, sees no particular significance in this idiom.

the universal kingship of God and Christ.[92] Within this larger associative complex, only those narrative scenes that envision judgment for these kings are to be read in a strictly negative or pejorative sense.[93] This allows the designation "the kings of the earth" to recall the larger motifs with which it is linked in the HB. Analysis of the individual texts then determines whether a negative, positive or simply neutral reading represents the author's intention.

5.5.5.1 Rev 1.5 ...ἀπὸ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ... ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς.

Literary Context

The introduction proper of Revelation (taken here to be 1.4-8)[94] functions as a prologue for the entire document by summarizing and anticipating its larger themes. This is accomplished by the author through the use of several symbols and idioms (i.e. "apocalyptic shorthand") that reappear at later points in the narrative. Thus several major themes / motifs are introduced at this stage in précis form: the seven churches in Asia Minor (1.4a), the affirmation of a sovereign God – both present and coming (1.4b-5,8), the current role and future vindicated status of the presently embattled Christian communities (1.6), and the ultimate response of the entire world to the irrepressible rule of God at the parousia (1.7).[95] Each of these themes is elaborated – often repetitively and progressively – in the visionary material, which constitutes the remainder of the document.

In the epistolary greeting from John to the seven churches in Asia Minor (1.4-6), Jesus Christ is proclaimed to be: "the ruler of the kings of the earth" (as the third segment of a tripartite title in 1.5). The context within which this claim is made seeks to summarize divine reality, as it exists in relation to the Christian community and the wider

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[92] On this the analysis of the present study proposes a fresh reading of this idiom. I agree with those who see 1.5 and 21.24 as semantically distinct from the otherwise pejorative uses (Bauckham, *Climax*, 315-316; Boring, *Revelation*, 220-222); however, I do so for very different reasons. Most commentators who discern a semantic difference do so on the grounds of the awkward role of this idiom in the description of the New Jerusalem (21.24). My own reading of this idiom as an intentional recasting of Solomonic traditions will be spelled out in what follows.

[93] I will argue that every case (6.15; 16.14; 17.2,18; 18.3,9; 19.17-21), aside from the first and last, functions in this way.

[94] Several suggestions have been made regarding the function and integrity of 1.1-3 to both 1.4-8 and indeed the whole of Revelation.

[95] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation*, 41, suggests that this anticipatory character of the prologue excludes the possibility of its origin in earlier Christian hymnic tradition.

cosmos.[96] This greeting not only introduces a communicative strategy and literary motifs that are revisited throughout the document; it also reveals the set assumptions of John about the God upon which the authority and credibility of his visions rest. He presents Divine agency in a three-fold manner: God ("the One who was, is, and is coming"), spirit being(s) ("the seven spirits who are before his throne"),[97] and the exalted Christ. Set together with the first two titles – the faithful witness (ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός), and the first-born of the dead (ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν) – the three components of this titular description not only summarize the three stages of Jesus' "saving work" from a Christian perspective (life, death and resurrection, eschatological triumph)[98] but also reflect key Jewish messianic traditions.[99] Evaluating how these titles function and are to be interpreted provides the crucial literary contextual background for an evaluation of the symbolic value of "the kings of the earth" in 1.5.

Finally, three predicative statements about his activity – all of which relate to the present experience of the Christian communities – follow this description of Jesus Christ

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[96] Müller, *Offenbarung*, 74, states "Fragt man abschließend, in welcher Beziehung die drei Titel zueinander stehen, so ergibt sich, daß es allein um die Bedeutung des bereits erhöhten Herrn geht...Jedesmal steht ein Aspekt der eschatologischen Offenbarung im Blick, wie sie der Verfasser der Offb vortragen will."

[97] Most commentators interpret this unusual idiom (3.1; 4.5; 5.6) as a reference to the Holy Spirit with symbolic theological significance attached to its numeric value (see Bauckham, *Theology*, 109-115, for a recent restatement of the traditional interpretation). Aune, *Revelation*, 33-36, argues for a reading of this idiom as a reference to the seven principal angels of God common in early Jewish thought. Despite the fact that "spirits" is rarely used of angels in early Jewish literature (*Jub.* 1.25; 2.2; 15.31-32; *1 En.* 61.12) and more commonly associated with demonic spirits, Aune suggests that evidence from Qumran establishes a legitimate positive tradition of such usage for angels (see his list of references from 1QM; 1QH; 4Q403; 4Q405 and 4QShirShabb). He further cites Tob 12.15 and several textual variants of *1 En.* 20.2-8, which represent a tradition of six or seven archangels "who watch" (cf. Lk 1.19) as examples of this tradition. Aune has well noted the tendency among Christian interpreters to over-read a Trinitarian theology, more fully developed than was likely for John, back into the text of Revelation. See L.T. Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration*, on the role of angelic beings in Revelation (and the oft-blurred boundaries between angelic and Christological categories: cf. 1.12-20; 10.2-8; 14.6-20; 19.8-10; 22.6-9). However, the close connections between the various idioms for "spirit being (s)" and divine presence – especially as they relate to: (1) God's throne as the locus of his activity; and, (2) the role and function of the Lamb – indicate that we likely have here an early circumlocution for the Spirit as an active agent within the sphere of divine activity. A further observation against the view of Aune is that the author of Revelation employs the terms πνεῦμα and ἄγγελος in a consistently distinctive fashion.

[98] See especially Aune, *Revelation*, 27-28, and Michaels, *Revelation*, 55-56. Against this view see Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation*, 41, whose valid argument for the formative character of this titular description for the overall theological agenda of the author – and therefore its lack of early Christian traditional influence – is unnecessarily overstated.

[99] Most commentators recognize the direct influence of Ps 89.38,28 [LXX 88.38,28] behind the linking of these three descriptive titles (see below) and the general influence of Ps 2.1-2, 9-10 here and elsewhere in the document (see *Excursus Two*). See especially Aune, *Revelation*, 37, who suggests that Isa 43.10; 55.4 may also have shaped the construction of these titles.

as "ruler of the kings of the earth". Of particular interest is the author's description of the believing community as "*and he made us a kingdom, priests to God*" (1.6 – καὶ ἐποίησεν ἡμᾶς βασιλείαν ἱερεῖς τῷ θεῷ). In what way may the relationship between these two phrases best be understood? Does one explain the other? Do they refer to the same reality or are they independent? Schüssler Fiorenza, expanding the earlier suggestion of Minear,[100] has argued that the phrase in 1.5a is a "genitive of relation," which equates "the kings of the earth" with the "kingdom of priests." This is part of a larger argument in which she attempts to draw a neat parallelism between the tripartite titular description and the three predicative statements.[101] Such a reading allows her to eliminate human political entities – even if only as a concept and not in specifying terms here – entirely as referents of the first instance of the phrase "the kings of the earth." In their place believers, as representatives of the true kingdom over which the exalted Christ exercises his rule of grace and peace, both serve and reign. Beyond the textual problems associated with such a reading (above), two further issues appear insurmountable to sustain such a reading. First, Schüssler Fiorenza provides a detailed exegetical traditional dependence for 1.6 but leaves 1.5 almost completely aside. She attempts to draw connections with an LXX text form of Exodus 19.6 only attested in the Theodotian version. However, this leads her to ignore the implications of the more direct and conceptually significant parallels in Psalm 89 and the interpretive tradition it represents. Second, how such a crucial symbol for the author's overall rhetorical strategy could represent opposite human referents without some further clues as to its being so is never adequately addressed by Schüssler Fiorenza. It appears that the attempt to harmonize several visions regarding the

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[100] Paul S. Minear, *I Saw a New Earth: An Introduction to the Visions of the Apocalypse* (Washington: Corpus Books, 1968).

[101] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Justice and Judgment*, 71,78 n.18, summarizes her earlier, doctoral work (*Priester für Gott: Studien zum Herrschafts- und Priestermotiv in der Apokalypse* [NTAbh 7; Münster: Aschendorf, 1972]), in which her text-critical analysis renders 1.6 "and he installed us into kingship" (which might be reflected as "and he made us kings"). Curiously, a minority textual tradition preserved in the Byzantine manuscripts (Maj.A) renders βασιλεῖς in place of βασιλείαν and is reflected in the AV and RSV "kings" and LUT "Königen." On several grounds Schüssler Fiorenza's conclusions may be challenged: (1) her own perspective and method are shaped by the concerns of liberation and feminist theological readings which, in this case, depend on suspect textual and literary evidence; (2) one is required to admit two entirely separate fields of reference for the same idiom – especially in the case of its first appearance in the document. While the language of 'kingship' or 'kingdom' is unquestionably used in more than one contextual setting, such a nuanced interpretation of divergent referents for the same symbol is ultimately unconvincing. Beale, while rightly arguing against Schüssler Fiorenza's view that in 1.5 Christ's rule is over his people (*Revelation* 191), then agrees with her view of 1.6 and takes it even further (194-195), but again, unconvincingly.

believing community (1.6; 5.9-10; 20.4), has forced any interpretation of 1.5 to simply be subsumed by the interests of these other visions.

Narrative Location

As the first appearance of "the kings of the earth" in Revelation, the text of 1.5 presents the following particular consideration: As the only instance of this idiom outside of John's visionary material and, since the first and last occasions of this phrase both appear outside the context of a final judgment, could a programmatic usage of this idiom in 1.5 and 21.24 form an *inclusio*? If so, what narrative function might such a literary feature suggest? By placing the first instance of this phrase in the document's prologue, the author has made an important conceptual statement. He is concerned primarily with defining present *reality* for his readers, and aims to provide the theological backdrop against which Christian communities are to read everything that follows.[102] The title "the ruler of the kings of the earth" functions primarily to assert, in language that evokes both contemporary political images and biblical traditions, a belief about the cosmological position of the exalted Christ. The complex of theological claims made by the use of this titular description are intended to be recalled by the audience in later specific references to the "kings of the earth." In other words, it is significant to the narrative design of the prologue that "the kings of the earth" are not the subject (grammatically or conceptually) of 1.5 – there is no specific human referent in view in this use of the idiom. The primary concern of the author is to introduce graphic images that assert the pre-eminence of Christ. In this way they serve as recognizable "shorthand" for the theological assumptions they represent later on in the visionary material.

Further it is noteworthy that the immediate context in 1.5 does not reflect the language or images associated with final judgment scenes. Within the subsequent body of visionary material, all other instances of this phrase (with the exception of 21.24) occur only in the context of final judgment.[103] The appearance of these kings in both 6.15-17 and 16.14-21 comes in the climactic scenes of judgment in the cycles of seals and bowls. In each case, the author depicts "the end" of human rebellion against God – in the latter

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[102] See especially Müller, *Offenbarung*, 73-74.

[103] This is argued on the basis of a narrative reading of Revelation (see Chapter 4 above), which recognizes not only the repetitive nature of the narrative development but its in-built progression in terms of detail as opposed to time.

case this rebellion is incited by demonic powers (16.13). Significantly, the third collection of visionary material (17.1-21.8), in which the majority of references to "the kings of the earth" occur, seeks to provide a more detailed rationale for and description of this comprehensive judgment envisioned in précis form in 6.15-17 and 16.14-21. Thus in each of these settings "the kings of the earth" are aligned with the corruption, sensual excess and abuse of power of Babylon in a way, which implicates them equally in Babylon's sins (17.2; 18.3,9). Finally, they represent the final fate of human and demonic rebellion against God in 19.17-21 – there pictured as a cooperative force. They gather together for war (cf. 16.14,16; 17.13-14) against the Lamb/Warrior and are summarily defeated and judged in what appears to have permanent consequences (19.21).

In contrast, the immediate literary context of 1.5 neither foreshadows nor provides any of the negative connotations later associated with the judgment of these kings.[104] This observation alone speaks for the necessity to avoid a broad characterization of this term as exclusively negative and pejorative. As a modifying phrase for the exalted Christ, its role in this particular case is delineated by the larger introductory claims the author is making about the central figure of his visions. Understood within its own literary and conceptual context, this phrase operates outside any direct reference to final judgment. However, while this phrase was not intended by John to denote specific human referents here, his audience may readily have made such associations. Its placement in the prologue suggests first the theological purpose of christological description; and second, the communicative role of a broader, paradigmatic conceptualization of the rule of God in which the rest of the document is fully immersed.[105] Within this larger framework, subsequent occurrences of "the kings of the earth" located in the various depictions of final judgment assume human referents as the opponents of God. There they serve to illustrate in more specific terms the effects of his just rule over creation. The final instance of this term in 21.24 returns once more to this larger framework concerned with a descriptive representation of the rule of God suggested by its use in 1.5 (on 21.24, see below). From the standpoint of the document's literary and narrative shape therefore, the

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[104] Commentators do not generally make this distinction, although Aune, *Revelation*, 40, suggests that 1.5 provides "a relatively close but antithetical parallel" to 17.18. The context of 17.8-18, however, intentionally provides distinct referents and appears to prove the claim made here.
[105] Gray, *Reign of God*, 259-270.

author has created an *inclusio* linguistically and conceptually.[106] Whether such a reading can be sustained depends primarily upon which traditions the author made use of in his depiction of the exalted Christ.

Traditional Sources

There is widespread recognition among commentators of the dependence of the three christological titles in 1.5 upon Psalm 89.36-37,28 [LXX 88.37-38,28].[107] The psalmist, speaking on behalf of God, rehearses his dynastic promises to David as "I will make him my *first-born* (בכור / πρωτότοκον), *the highest of the kings of the earth* (עליון מלכי־ארץ / ὑψηλὸν παρὰ τοῖς βασιλεῦσιν τῆς γῆς)" (89.28), and "...his line will endure forever and his throne (will endure) like the sun before me; and as the moon has been set right forever, a *faithful witness* in the sky [יכון עולם ועד בשחק / ὁ μαρτύς ἐν οὐρανῷ πιστός]" (89.36-37). In light of the thematic and linguistic significance of each of the three titles in 1.5 to the overall theological message of Revelation, it is not surprising that the author chose a psalm which allows him to combine the motifs of witness, resurrection and rulership.[108] Other suggestions of textual or conceptual indebtedness have often been made. However, they usually reflect the awareness of scholars that major eschatological themes and traditions are represented by this tri-partite title more so than that any direct literary dependence exists.[109]

As a royal psalm which both celebrates God's past promise of faithfulness to the Davidic line and laments its current state of humiliation, Psalm 89 sets the ideal Israelite

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[106] Interestingly, Bauckham, *Climax*, 242, suggests that if it were not for a positive depiction of "the kings of the earth" in 21.24, the status of Jesus as "ruler of the kings of the earth" could only take effect in crushing their rebellion and destroying them. In contrast, this study seeks to determine whether the author's commitment to a Davidic presentation of the exalted Christ (cf. Rev 5.5) enables him to employ this term in the broader sense of vindication and exaltation (1.5; 21.24), within which the narrower concept of judgment (all other references) serves as a related, supporting motif.

[107] Aune, *Revelation*, 39; Beale, *Revelation*, 190; Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 187; Charles, *Revelation*, 1:14.

[108] Of the three phrases in Ps 89 that are used in 1.5, the concept of "firstborn" requires the most interpretive license.

[109] Especially in light of the ongoing importance of μάρτυς / μαρτυρία language throughout Revelation, some have suggested that the first title ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός represents a wider tradition of witness found in Deutero-Isa (esp. 43.10; 55.4; cf. Prov 14.5, 25; Jer 42.5; Isa 8.2). Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 111, concludes, however, that the appearance of the second and third titles in Psalm 89.28 along with similar language for the first title in 89.37 "makes it likely that all three are the result of a single christological exegesis of this dynastic Psalm."

monarchy against the background of the kingship of Yahweh.[110] This is stated both in cosmic (89.12: "yours are the heavens and yours is the earth") and national (89.19: "the holy one of Israel, our king") terms. Further, the perpetual character of the Davidic dynasty is celebrated in the following sequence of logic (presumably affirmed by the author of Revelation in light of his own use of the tradition): God established an eternal covenant with David (89.3-4,29,36-37); as proof of his kingship over all creation (89.14-18) he installed David's line as vice-regent over his people on earth (89.19-20); and, in so doing called him his firstborn (89.27a) giving him status above all of the kings of the earth (89.27b). As a way of illustrating the irrevocable quality of this covenant, the prospect of sin and faithlessness on the part of David's descendants is met with the promise of judgment on the one hand (89.30-32) but mercy on the other hand to preserve the covenant made with David (89.33-35). Finally, the imagery of the sun and moon as "faithful witness in the sky" is used as an analogy of the enduring nature of this dynasty (89.36-37; cf. 72.5 [71.5]). The remainder of the psalm (89.38-52) laments the failure of the Davidic line and the disgrace of "the anointed one."[111]

Not only are the linguistic parallels between Psalm 89 and the christological titles in 1.5 readily apparent; the broader presentation of the Davidic line as precursor and progenitor of messianic hopes also contributes to the narrative trajectory of Revelation. The author's adoption of these symbols allows the reader of Revelation to enter into the conceptual world recalled by these images. Thus, those descriptions, which the psalmist associates with David (and by implication David's heir) the author of Revelation readily attributes to the exalted Christ.[112] To achieve this exegetical identification, the first title "faithful witness" bears no linguistic differences but anticipates and assumes the μαρτυρία/μαρτύς motif in Revelation. The concept of witness – while associated with belief and proclamation – specifically refers to the willingness of one to die for those

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[110] Gray, *Reign of God*, 7-9, argues with S. Mowinckel (*Psalmenstudien II: Das Thronbesteigungsfest Jahwäs und der Ursprung der Eschatologie*, 1922) that Gunkel's earlier classification of Pss 47; 93; 96-99 as enthronement psalms was much too narrow. In fact he adds to this category Pss 24; 29; 48; 68; 74.12-17; 84; 89.2,6-19; 149; and Exod 15.1-8. Further he suggests that Pss 33; 46; 65; 66.1-7; 81 provide evidence that the concept of Yahweh's kingship forms a major ideology in the Psalter which is taken up "...in passages in the prophets, the book of Job, in prophetic eschatology and in the eschatology of Daniel 7 and later apocalyptic..."

[111] Notice the language of "anointed one" (89.50; cf. Ps 2; see above, *Excursus Three*).

[112] This designation is largely unnoticed by commentators. Beale, (*Revelation*, 190-191) mentions it in passing. I argue here that in 1.5 (together with 21.24) John presents Christ in Solomonic language.

beliefs (cf. 2.13; 6.9; 11.3-13; 12.11; 20.4).[113] In this regard the author emphasizes the example of Jesus as the paradigm for Christian communities in Asia Minor (cf. 1.2,9; 5.5-6; 11.7-8; 12.10-11; 13.8). For the second title, the author of Revelation takes more creative license in appropriating the Davidic term "firstborn"[114] by adding "of the dead" as a way of asserting the paradigmatic nature of Jesus' resurrection. This motif of resurrection is an important element in the matrix of the author's depiction of future vindication and promise for the faithful community (2.11; 20.4-6). Finally, the third title – the focus of this inquiry – appears to be taken over as it stands, both linguistically and conceptually, by the author of Revelation. Here, too, one may suggest that while this description specifically refers to the exalted Christ, at the same time the motif of "rulership as vindication" is introduced by the author as also being in some way paradigmatic for the future destiny of the faithful community (2.26-27; 3.9; 5.9-10; 20.4; 22.5).[115] In order to probe further as to how this phrase was intended to function, its traditional roots must be evaluated.

While unquestionably a source of literary and theological inspiration for the christological titles of 1.5, Psalm 89 provides a broader conceptual framework for the overall narrative. As a psalm which celebrates the pre-eminence and eternal character of the Davidic dynasty based on God's faithfulness (89.3-4,20-37), might Psalm 89 serve the messianic function of attributing to the ultimate Davidic heir the promise of an idyllic reign which exerts, among other things, political dominion and influence not equalled since the days of Solomon?[116] If this is so, then the author of Revelation may conceptually be combining a tradition of Davidic superiority (Ps 89) with traditions that reflect the height of the Solomonic era (1 Chr 9.23; 1 Kgs 10.23-24). Not only do these references to the scope of Solomon's kingdom operate in broadly universal terms, they also specifically describe the activity of "the kings of the earth" in relation to Solomon.

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[113] BAGD, "μαρτυρία, μαρτύριον, μάρτυς," 493-494.

[114] Within the symbolic world of royal language and rhetoric, "firstborn" primarily suggested divine approval and validation of the Davidic king as God's representative on earth (cf. Ps 2.7). Eaton, *Kingship*, 146, suggests "he is the sole representative of God's kingdom over all nations."

[115] Recognition of this theme throughout Revelation does not, however, validate the application of an over-arching interpretive grid such as that proposed by Schüssler Fiorenza regarding 1.5-6 (see above).

[116] Bergman & Ottosson, *TDOT* 1:388-405. They cite Ps 89.28[27] as one example of instances where "the God of Israel is called 'the Most High over *kol ha'arets*, all the earth'" which "are indeed similar to ancient Near Eastern titles, which denote the god as lord of the land; but in Israel the context seems to show that the OT writers have in mind the sovereignty of the world" (395).

Their posture of deference, subservience and willingness to bring tribute (tax) reinforces the notion of Solomon's supremacy. The plausibility that such traditions informed John's exegetical imaging of Christ and the rule of God in 1.5, is further strengthened by the activity of "the kings of the earth" in 21.24. There the author describes them as bringing their glory to the New Jerusalem in terms reminiscent of the days of Solomon.[117]

Such a conceptual merging of royal/dynastic traditions provides a wider conceptual background for the idiom "the kings of the earth" against which its narrower usage operates (otherwise purely negative in scenes of final judgment). In other words, the primary concern for the author of Revelation is the portrayal of the actual fulfilment of Davidic rulership in the exalted Christ. Thus the titular description in 1.5 *and* the New Jerusalem vision in 21.24 function as a literary and theological *inclusio*. Within this larger rubric, the theological and existential concern of holding rogue nations and their leaders (i.e. "the kings of the earth") to account is part of the messianic function of the Davidic heir (cf. *Pss. Sol.* 17; *1 Enoch* 46; 48; 62-63). The use of this phrase in its predominantly negative sense, therefore, is at the service of the larger theological point the author wishes to make: the role, function and position of the exalted Christ is the eschatological embodiment of early Jewish messianic hopes and evidence of the full implementation of the rule of God.

In light of this reading of the biblical traditions that appear to shape John's titular description of the exalted Christ, some observations may be made regarding the final fate of "the kings of the earth." First, the language of 1.5 itself demands neither a positive nor negative perspective of these kings and their corresponding nations. Since the primary concern of the text is with the establishment of the rule of God, either a positive or negative stance by "the kings of the earth" could be well within the realm of possibility. Second, the pool of tradition that includes Psalm 89 – and on which the author's description of the exalted Christ is based – clearly makes reference to "the kings of the earth" in terms that imply their subservience and deference to the rightful Davidic king. Such traditions validate the notion of the subjugation of rogue rulers and nations as a way

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[117] While Isa 60.3,5,11 is unquestionably the literary source upon which John draws in 21.24, the Isaianic visions themselves draw on traditions celebrating the ideal Davidic/Solomonic kingdom and project them into the eschatological future as a means of vindicating both God and Israel as his people (see comments on 21.24 and its possible echo of 1 Kgs 5.14 [LXX] below).

of affirming the superiority and right to rule of the Davidic king. Third, it is important to keep in mind that the author's subsequent uses of this term appear to be consistently negative and pejorative – with the exception of 21.24 (see below). Determining how this phrase functioned in the author's symbolic world, and whether it could ultimately represent a group which experiences eschatological conversion, must take into account the strong possibility that the description offered above represents this symbol's larger, paradigmatic role in the communicative strategy of Revelation. These observations suggest that the author's use of this idiom is less a means of addressing the fate of actual political figures, and much more at the service of his claims about the exalted Christ.

5.5.5.2 Rev 6.15-17 οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς...ἔκρυψαν ἑαυτοὺς εἰς τὰ σπήλαια

Literary Context

The larger setting of this scene is the unsealing of the scroll by the Lamb (cf. 5.1-9), which portrays his authority and control over all human activity. The first four seals (6.1-8) describe various forms of injustice on earth while the final three seals describe the enactment of God's final justice and judgment (6.9-17; 8.1-5).[118] Several features of the description of cosmic upheaval in 6.12-17 suggest that, with the breaking of the sixth and seventh seals, the temporal horizon of the author's visionary material (i.e. the final judgment) has been reached.[119] The inclusion of a cosmic earthquake (6.12; 8.5) as a signal of God's decisive eschatological action parallels subsequent scenes of final judgment in Revelation (cf. 11.18; 16.18-20).[120] Further, Beale points out that if 6.12-17 may be read as the response to the cry of the martyrs in 6.9-11, then the exhortation to "wait until (the number) of their fellow workers and brothers who are about to be killed is completed" requires resolution which can only be provided at the final judgment.[121] Finally, that the culmination of this narrative development in 6.15-17 reflects OT

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[118] For convincing arguments regarding this type of "4 + 3" sequencing of the seals, bowls and trumpets as series of judgment visions, see Aune, *Revelation*, 392,495; and especially Bauckham, *Climax*, 10-15.
[119] Beale, *Revelation*, 398-402. See also Chapter 4 (above) regarding the influence of the structure of the Apocalypse on its narrative development and trajectory.
[120] Bauckham, "The Eschatological Earthquake," in *Climax*, 199-209. He also suggests that the language of 20.11 mirrors the imagery of 6.12-17, thereby further strengthening the identification of the latter as a text that represents the final judgment. Gray, *Reign of God*, 262, suggests that the earthquake and darkness recall the epiphany of Yahweh in the covenant tradition (Exod 19) and in the enthronement setting of Ps 97.
[121] Beale, *Revelation*, 395-396.

traditions regarding the great day of Yahweh has been commonly recognized.[122] The phrase "the great day of their wrath" (6.17: ἡ ἡμέρα ἡ μεγάλη τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτῶν) serves as an unmistakable indication of final judgment in Revelation (cf. 11.18: ἦλθεν ἡ ὀργή σου; 16.14,19: τῆς ἡμέρας τῆς μεγάλης τοῦ θεοῦ ... τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτοῦ).[123] Here we have a conflation of well-established motifs vis-à-vis the Day of the Lord with similar rhetorical function in apocalyptic literature.[124] The element of this description most unique to John is that he links this tradition to both God and the Lamb (cf. 6.16-17).[125] Although the author arrives at an 'End' of sorts, there is much more his visions will yet explore both in terms of its detail and cosmic impact. In each respective seven-fold cycle (seals, bowls, trumpets) the fifth, sixth and seventh elements function together as cumulative word of final judgment – and here especially the sixth seal in light of the 'silence' of the seventh seal (8.1-5).[126]

Narrative Location

The portrayal of "the kings of the earth" in this scenario as antagonistic toward God, hostile to his people (cf. 6.9-11) and, therefore, primary objects of his judgment, also has strong parallels in further repeated visions of final judgment. In 16.14,18-21 they again appear in the final sequence of judgment; in 17.1-18.24 they feature prominently in the seduction of Babylon (17.2), contribute to her destruction (17.15-16), and make a futile attempt at war against the Lamb (17.12-14). Finally, in 19.17-21 they appear in the scenes of final, unsuccessful war against the Divine Warrior Lamb. Therefore, one may conclude that the author intentionally and consistently portrays human political leaders as not simply implicated by complicity to rebellion against God, but in fact as chief

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[122] See the thorough treatment of OT precedent in Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 158-166, and Beale, *Revelation*, 400-402. The primary OT texts for this tradition include: Isa 2.10,18-21; 13.9; 34.4-5,12; Jer 4.29; Hos 10.8; Joel 2.10-11,31; Nah 1.5-6; Zeph 1.14-15; 2.2-3; Mal 4.5 [MT 3.23; LXX 3.22].

[123] Beale, *Revelation*, 401, also suggests that 19.17 (τὸ δεῖπνον τὸ μέγα τοῦ θεοῦ) also reflects this same tradition and points out that in each case (6.15; 16.14; 19.19) "the kings of the earth" also appear in the narrative. Rev 11.18 refers to "the nations" and "those who destroy the earth."

[124] The combination of several motifs – (1) God's wrath exercised upon humans; (2) their resultant fear, panic, terror and trembling; and, (3) their vain attempt to flee or hide from his presence – are most strikingly present in the Enochic corpus (*1 En.* 1.3-8; 62.3-6,10-12; 90.18-19; 100.8; 102.1-3); see also 4 Ezra 6.22-24 for a more distant echo of the motif of terror at the end of the age.

[125] The manuscript evidence for the possessive pronoun is split between the plural αὐτῶν and the singular αὐτοῦ. While a similar construction in 22.3 results in the use of the singular pronoun, it appears here as though the author's Christology (particularly in light of the prominence of the Lamb in 5.1-6.17) influences his appropriation of this otherwise standard tradition.

[126] Bauckham, *Climax*, 11-12,15.

instigators of it. Nothing less than their complete judgment will be satisfactory. In light of this consistent portrayal of human rulers as rebellious toward God and therefore ultimately doomed, it is no surprise that "the kings of the earth" surface in these successive visions of final judgment with such regularity. To what degree their inclusion represents either the author's own agenda, standard apocalyptic convention, or the influence of traditional sources may allow for a clearer perspective of the overall rhetorical function of this idiom in Revelation.

In this first appearance of the designation "the kings of the earth" since the prologue (1.5), its apocalyptic default definition (negative and pejorative label) surfaces. Narratively, the pejorative use of this idiom in 6.15 may be considered determinative for its remaining instances in Revelation on the basis of both its contextual function and the tradition on which it is modelled (except 21.24-26, discussed below). Thus the significance of the idiom in this text lies in its literary positioning in the cycle of seals (6.1-8.4). Not only is the prominence of its referents emphasized among the classification of earth's inhabitants; their inability to manipulate this status for any special dispensation/favour at the hour of judgment is also highlighted. Further, the author's use of traditions which imply the ultimate doom of those identified by this label reflects a state of affairs in which his appropriation of them produces an even more polemically-charged rhetoric in the current text. Each of these elements contributes to the overall narrative impression with which the author seeks to influence the opinion of his readers regarding these human political leaders and the nations they represent.

Traditional Sources

Two traditions related to "the great day of Yahweh's wrath" appear to be drawn together in 6.15-17 for the purpose of supplying the imagery with which the author describes conditions on that Day for those to whom judgment is coming. On the one hand, 6.15b with its description of people looking for hiding places in caves and among rocks and mountains in utter terror reflects the language and imagery of the three-fold use of that motif in Isaiah 2.6-21.[127] There, as an oracle *against Israel*, the text describes the humiliation and despair of those who look for refuge in the chasms of the rocks (MT במערות צרים / LXX σχισμὰς τῶν πετρῶν) and among the holes of the dust (MT

[127] Gray, *Reign of God*, 262; Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 161-166; Caird, *Revelation*, 89-90.

במהלות עפר / LXX τρωγλὰς τῆς γῆς) as they attempt to flee the wrath of Yahweh (Isa 2.10,19,21). On the other hand, the influence of Hosea 10.8 also provides important elements of the day of Yahweh where those destined for judgment call out to the mountains and hills to fall on them and cover them.[128] While these OT traditions do not refer explicitly to "the kings of the earth," the Isaianic text emphasizes the humiliation of the proud as one consequence of the appearing of Yahweh (Isa 2.9,11-12). In both cases, the prophetic oracles target those who live in Israel (Isa 2.6; Hos 10.1-2) and specifically predict the human reaction to Yahweh's judgment.

Several observations may be made as to how John was able to incorporate his own agenda regarding human rulers through the addition of "the kings of the earth" in these OT traditions. While some have argued that the immediate context of judgment against idolatry in these two traditions has links with a larger concern with idolatry in Revelation, there is no contextual evidence that such a concern represents the primary agenda of 6.12-17.[129] The present context functions as a decisive answer to the cry for vindication by the martyrs in the opening of the fifth seal (6.9-11). Further, while in their HB settings these oracles are aimed at those within Israel, it is evident that the list of those implicated in this scene of final judgment both draws attention to specific 'target groups' and serves as a collectivising representation of humanity. Thus it appears John's intent was never to reproduce the concerns of his traditional sources in this case, but rather to appropriate their imaging of the Day of Judgment for his own purposes. To that end he is then able to adapt and insert the idiom of "the kings of the earth" into this present context with its concern for the vindication of the people of God and the judgment of those who have oppressed them.

By linking "the kings of the earth" with other status groups – nobility (οἱ μεγιστᾶνες), high-ranking officers (οἱ χιλίαρχοι), rich (οἱ πλούσιοι), and powerful / mighty (οἱ ἰσχυροί) – John not only inserts his appropriation of a third "Day of the Lord" tradition, but also incorporates a common apocalyptic theme of judgment which

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[128] Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 163; Beale, *Revelation*, 400; Bousset, *Offenbarung*, 275.

[129] *Contra* Beale, *Revelation*, 399-402, who interprets John's use of these OT sources primarily with reference to idolatry. While the issue of idolatry is certainly present in Revelation, and elsewhere linked to "the inhabitants of the earth" and "the kings of the earth" (9.20; 13.4,8,12-15; 17.2,8), this instance reflects their antagonism of the faithful (martyrs in particular).

envisions those with earthly authority being stripped of all pretense and status.[130] In light of the dependence of 6.13-14 on the imagery of Isaiah 34.4-5, Beale suggests that this list of status groups in 6.15 reflects at least in part the similarly constructed list in Isaiah 34.12 (LXX βασιλεῖς / ἄρχοντες / μεγιστᾶνες).[131] Several features of this prophetic announcement – particularly in the way it appears in the LXX tradition – appear to have influenced the construction of 6.15-17: (1) the scope of address is universal – ἔθνη "nations," ἄρχοντες "princes / rulers," ἡ γῆ καὶ οἱ ἐν αὐτῇ οἰκουμένη καὶ ὁ λαὸς ὁ ἐν αὐτῇ "the inhabited earth and people in it" (Isa 34.1-2); (2) these labeled groups (as representative of humanity) are called to witness the wrath of God in judgment upon them (Isa 34.2); and, (3) the cause of their judgment is their persecution / oppression of the faithful in Israel (Isa 33.2-3,14-19; 35.1-4). Thus this traditional source has not only provided John with the theme of vindication of the faithful; it also contains the linguistic trigger (βασιλεῖς) for John to incorporate his idiom "the kings of the earth" and may well have provided a template for his own creation of a "list" of those who stood in opposition to God. This list of terms in 6.15 seems to reflect more specifically a classification resonant with the Greco-Roman context of Asia Minor[132] – not surprising since "Babylon" is a major recipient of judgment in the more detailed visions of 17.1-21.8.[133] At the same time, however, its ultimate narrative purpose appears to be the insistence by John on a comprehensive, universal judgment irrespective of political, economic or social status.[134] While "the kings of the earth" will continue to merit attention because of the visibility of their abuse of power and antagonistic stance toward God, their destiny carries the same doom as that of all others who participate in this cause.

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[130] This is particularly true of the Enochic *Similitudes* (see *1 En.* 46.4-5; 48.8; 53.5; 55.4; 56.5; 62.1,3,6,9; 63.1,12).

[131] Beale, *Revelation*, 399. Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 159-161, strangely fails to see this connection in spite of demonstrating strong connections between 6.13-14 and Isa 34.4.

[132] For example, the term χιλίαρχος (BAGD, 881-882; Lat. *tribunus militum* – "leader of a thousand soldiers") denoted a particular military leadership role that would have been a status symbol in the context in which John and the Christian communities were situated.

[133] The influence of Isa 34 upon the descriptive imagery of the Apocalypse is also evident in the description of Babylon's destruction (18.2), which employs the language of the desolation of Edom (Isa 34.11-17). Further, the analysis of 19.17-21 (below) reflects on its similarities and creative differences to the list here in 6.15.

[134] Charles, *Revelation*, 1:181-182, notes, "It includes everyone from the Emperor down to the slave."

A more unusual contribution to this tradition by the author of Revelation is the mixing of these group labels that denote power and status with the broadly inclusive "every slave and every free person" (πᾶς δοῦλος καὶ ἐλεύθερος; cf. 13.16; 19.18 for this construction elsewhere in Revelation). Clearly, while the powerful rulers on earth represent blatant examples of human rebellion against God, the author of Revelation insists that from the divine perspective, political might and social status count for nothing. As a way of further reducing the appeal and ultimate legitimacy of these powerful human rulers in the eyes of his readers, John seeks to create a "levelling effect" by which they have no greater significance than a lowly slave.[135] Such a perspective, while framed in the author's own version of a common rhetorical device in apocalyptic writing,[136] also reflects the agenda present in Isaiah 2.11-17 where the "proud" and "haughty" are brought to humiliation by Yahweh. Here while the oracle is directed to those in the land of Israel who worshipped idols made with their hands, the actual referents are labelled in the broadest possible terms (Isa 2.11,17; the texts both employ the same terms: MT אדם; LXX ἄνθρωπος).

Of particular interest for an evaluation of this list of the guilty status groups is the similar language of the Enochic *Similitudes* (*1 En.* 62.1,3,6,9; 63.12) where the phrase "the kings and the mighty and the exalted, and those who rule the dry ground" denotes the primary groups of those who face the certain judgment of the Lord of Spirits and the Chosen One.[137] Here too, the key motifs in this depiction of final judgment and vindication are: its 'universal' setting and scope, the persecution of the faithful by those who wield power as grounds for their punishment, and the unrelenting wrath of God in exercising just judgment. It is apparent in the case of the *Similitudes* that the author makes little distinction between those who abuse positions of power and "sinners." This raises the possibility that by linking together similar groups in 6.15, the author of

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[135] Although note a similar combination of diverse 'labels' in the judgment scene of *2 Bar* 70.2-10 where, unlike Revelation, a more distinct socio-economic chaos is envisioned "...and obscure men will have dominion over men of reputation, and the lowly born will be exalted above the nobles."

[136] See especially *1 En.* 62.3-5,9; 63.1; 94.6-11; 102.1-3 (cf. *Jub.* 23.19; *2 Bar.* 70.3,4,6).

[137] Several combinations of these terms are found in the citations given with *1 En.* 62.9 being reflected in the quotation above. In each case, however, "kings" are not only present in the formula, but appear first in the respective lists (*1 En.* 63.12 being the only exception). The Ethiopic reflected here is *wayewadqu kʷellomu nagast ʾazzizan waleʿulan waʾella yemalekewwa layabs baqedmu bagassamu.* See Chapter 3 for further evaluation of the "kings of the earth" in the *Similitudes.*

Revelation also had a distinct and unfavourable view of those who exercise political and economic influence. In this regard his rhetoric appears strikingly similar to that of the meturgeman in *Targum Isaiah* 2.13-22 who polemicizes "the kings of the Gentiles" as those who will "*enter in caves of the rocks and in holes of the dust, from before the fearful one, the Lord, and from the brilliance of his glory when he is revealed to shatter the wicked of the earth.*"[138] The more general description of the day of the Lord in Isaiah 2.6-22, with its depiction of people fleeing from the wrath of Yahweh, finds fertile ground in the imagination of both the meturgeman and the author of Revelation as they refine it into a specific polemic against political rulers. Together with the evidence from the *Similitudes*, it appears that descriptions of terror and flight in the eschatological future on the part of those who previously terrorized earth's inhabitants are common apocalyptic fare. As such they are based in the more general prophetic descriptions of conditions at Yahweh's ultimate visitation.

In summary, 6.15-17 owes its overall theological perspective and communicative strategy of vindication, as well as its descriptive imagery, to three significant OT traditions concerned with the Day of the Lord. Together they provide both implicit (the haughty and proud in Isa 2) and explicit (οἱ βασιλεῖς, and the context of oppression in Isa 34) features that prompt John to place the idiom "the kings of the earth" in a setting of final and comprehensive judgment. Thus, he anticipates the later detailed descriptions of their participation in activities antagonistic toward God and his people (16.12-16; 17.2; 18.3,9-10; 19.17-19) and their ultimate destruction (17.12-14; 19.20-21).

5.5.5.3 Rev 10.11 Δεῖ σε πάλιν προφητεῦσαι ἐπὶ λαοῖς καὶ ἔθνεσιν καὶ γλώσσαις καὶ βασιλεῦσιν πολλοῖς

Literary Context

As perhaps the text with the least immediate affinity to the cluster being considered here, 10.11 nevertheless presents important points for consideration – not least in light of what some commentators have suggested about it in the overall narrative scheme of Revelation.[139] As the climactic moment of a second prophetic call narrative

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[138] Bruce D. Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum: Introduction, Translation, Apparatus and Notes* (ArBib, vol. 11; Martin McNamara, ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), 6-7.

[139] It is crucial to the thesis of Bauckham that this text represents the prophetic introduction to the primary concerns of the "vision proper" (see review of his position [2.5] and critique [4.2] above).

(10.1-11; cf. 1.9-20) this text functions to set the parameters of John's task ("*You must prophesy again about peoples and nations and tongues/languages and many kings*"). The placement of this narrative – and the closely related visions of the measuring of the temple (11.1-2) and prophetic enactment of mission (11.3-13) – interrupts the sequence of trumpets (8.6-11.19) between the sixth and seventh trumpets. This is precisely the same point at which the cycle of seals was interrupted (7.1-17).[140]

Several significant elements in 10.1-11 are taken from the prophetic call narrative of Ezekiel 2-3.[141] The particular construction of the four-fold target group of John's renewed prophetic mandate (10.8-11) creatively inverts the particularistic boundaries of Ezekiel's call (Ezek 3.5-6) into a call for John with broadly universal ramifications. For the reader who was familiar with the narrow parameters of Ezekiel's call, this radical reversal of Ezekiel 3.5-6 and would have unmistakably signalled its intent. For this reason, the formula ἐπὶ λαοῖς καὶ ἔθνεσιν καὶ γλώσσαις καὶ βασιλεῦσιν πολλοῖς (see *Excursus Two*) becomes a literary signal intended to convey a fully universal range of effect.[142] The important change in the formula here is from φυλή to βασιλεύς. The inclusion of "kings" in the formula here (which narratively functions much like the list of 6.15-17), demonstrates the polemic with which John (indirectly) addresses the world's rulers. Thus, John is a prophet not only for the Church but also for the world – a feature of his mandate that the subsequent visions make clear.

5.5.5.4 Rev 16.14-21 ἃ ἐκπορεύεται ἐπὶ τοὺς βασιλεῖς τῆς οἰκουμένης ὅλης

Literary Context

The particular narrative circumstances of 16.14 place this motif of the final military engagement of the kings of the earth by God (through his messianic agent) at the decisive moment of the final judgment of humanity. This reflects the similar depiction in

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[140] See comments on 6.15-17 where it was noted that the sixth and seventh seals together appear to signal the final judgment of God upon the whole of humanity irrespective of status or power. Similarly here, the final images of judgment and vindication appear to be melded in the sixth (9.13-21) and seventh (11.15-19) trumpets. Note the comments below on 16.14-21 where this same feature characterizes the climactic sequence of the sixth and seventh bowls.

[141] This includes: angelic figure (Ezek 2.1; Rev 10.1,3); open scroll (Ezek 2.9-10; Rev 10.2,8); command to eat (Ezek 2.8; 3.1; Rev 10.9); taste of the scroll (Ezek 3.2-3; Rev 10.10); and, target audience (Ezek 3.5-6; Rev 10.11). See Bauckham, *Climax*, 246-247,263-265.

[142] Bauckham, *Climax*, 326-337, for a detailed analysis of the variations of this formula. While the semantic range of this formula is undoubtedly universal in scope, Bauckham's tenuous reading of the preposition ἐπί in the construction cited above (10.11) as directionally positive proclamation is grammatically unlikely and inconsistent with the immediately following literary context.

the previous cycle of seals (as noted above) and further anticipates the third major series of visionary material in Revelation (17.1-21.8), which takes up this very theme and describes it in detail from the standpoint of each of the key players in the drama.[143] A further feature of this particular text is that is makes explicit the author's belief that these earthly kings are linked (either by cooperation or by deceptive coercion) with demonic powers against God (16.13-14).[144]

Narrative Location

In spite of its unique construction, which occurs only here in Revelation, this phrase shares strong conceptual ties with the otherwise relatively uniform shape (6.15) of this idiomatic "kings of the earth" phrase.[145] We noted that within the visionary material of Revelation, 6.15 was the first occurrence of this phrase and carried with it a decidedly negative connotation. In 16.12-21 one finds not only the same level of polemic, but perhaps even more significantly, a similar immediate literary context – both texts depict the climactic episodes of their respective cycles of judgment. In the first instance the author describes the desperate and inevitable fate of the kings of the earth alongside all other people as a consequence of the final judgment sequence of the seven seals (6.1-8.4).[146] In the cycle of the seven bowls (15.1; 16.1-21), it is again the political leaders of the world's peoples which draw the attention of the author and are linked directly to the final sequence of judgment upon all those who maintain a posture of rebellion toward God (16.18-21). Thus one may suggest that these kings appear as antagonists of the rule of God precisely at the point in these cycles where definitive judgment is meted out. By placing "the kings of the earth" at this climactic moment in the narrative, the author leaves no doubt as to what he believes about the intrinsic character and final fate of the specific human referents of this phrase.[147]

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[143] This narrative scheme of successive enlargement in the four major series of visions in Revelation is outlined in the previous chapter on structure and narrative development (Chapter 4).
[144] This theme of demonic alignment with the political leaders of the world against God and his people is symbolically described in 13.1-17 and then most graphically portrayed in the final battle scene (19.11-21).
[145] This particular phrase "the kings of the entire inhabited world" is to be considered semantically equivalent to "the kings of the earth" according to K.L Schmidt, "βασιλεύς," *TDNT*, 1:577. In support see most recently, Aune, *Revelation*, 40, and Beale, *Revelation*, 191.
[146] Although technically part of the sixth seal, the seventh seal reveals only silence and completion.
[147] See the discussion on 1.5 (above) and 21.24 (below) where the claim is made that no good textual or narrative evidence exists to assume that the author has specific human referents in mind in the first and last instances of this phrase in Revelation.

5.5.5.5 Rev 17.1–19.21 "The Kings of the Earth" in the Judgment Visions

Literary Context

Within the larger narrative context of Revelation, it is not surprising to find the highest concentration of the phrase "the kings of the earth" in this third collection of visionary material (17.1-21.8). Of the nine appearances of this phrase being evaluated in Revelation, five occur in this particular section (17.2,18; 18.3,9-10; 19.19). While each of these instances of this phrase may be shown to have specific functions in the overall rhetorical purpose of the author, there is also good reason to suggest that together they represent a collection of references to "the kings of the earth" which appears to emphasize a uniformly negative message.[148] Several additional general references to kings in this section (17.12-14,16; 19.16,18) also carry predominantly negative connotations and contribute to this overall picture.

A brief overview of the relationship between the various "kings of the earth" texts in this section helps set the contextual scene from a literary perspective. In the first place, 17.2 introduces the "kings of the earth" as intrinsically linked with the primary focus of the vision. It is their fornication with the whore Babylon (μεθ' ἧς ἐπόρνευσαν οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς) which is cited as grounds for *her* judgment and destruction.[149] Similarly, the further inclusion of "the inhabitants of the earth" carries the same set of rhetorical implications whereby primary blame is placed upon Babylon (ἐμεθύσθησαν οἱ κατοικοῦντες τὴν γῆν). By their participation in and mediation of this 'fornication' to the inhabitants of the earth (framed as "intoxication"), "the kings of the earth" are implicated in the sins and judgment of the vision's primary target – Babylon. This polemical casting of the "kings" and "nations" (the latter now in place of "the inhabitants

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[148] An apparent chronological and conceptual dilemma is created in the narrative by the fact that "the kings of the earth" are said to destroy Babylon on the one hand (17.16), while mourning over her destruction on the other hand (18.9-10). Further, all this is said to take place *after* the text has described their destruction (17.14). This important matter is discussed in the analysis of each of those texts below.

[149] Aune, sensitive to feminist readings of Rev 17-18, suggests that this is a "flimsy" all-too-common example of an ancient and modern trend to place the brunt of blame and judgment for sexual infidelity upon the female party (*Revelation*, 930-31, 987-88). Surely this is an overreaction which ignores the anticipated narrative resolution of the judgment of the kings themselves (17.12-14; 19.17-21), underestimates the influence of Rome upon conquered states which the author of Revelation believed it to hold, and most strangely, pushes the metaphor in a much too "literal" direction.

of the earth") is then restated in virtually identical but inverted terms in 18.3, where the structure is parallel to 17.2 and the message consistent but its content is reversed.[150]

An explanation of the sexual metaphor in 17.2 is not offered until 17.18 when the *angelus interpres* states that the great city Babylon exercised political authority over these kings (ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη ἡ ἔχουσα βασιλείαν ἐπὶ τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς). The way in which the kings (and inhabitants, nations, and merchants) of the earth are said to benefit from these alliances is stated in primarily economic terms in 18.9-19 (the key term being στρηνιάω "to live in sensuality or luxury,"[151] followed by a list of 28 commercially traded items in 18.12-13).[152] Their collective grief serves to accentuate the influence and excess of Babylon.

Between these descriptions of the gaudy excess and worldwide economic prostitution of Rome that implicate "the kings of the earth," the author includes two subsidiary motifs that involve these "kings": (1) They band together in an unsuccessful war campaign against the Lamb and his armies (17.12-14, cf. 11.7; 16.14,16; 19.11-21). It is significant contextually that an attempt by the kings to make war against the Lamb occurs twice in this visionary collection and both instances become the narrative location in which the exalted Christ is given the title βασιλεὺς βασιλέων "king of kings" (17.14; 19.16). This label recalls in this particular military context the initial titular description of Christ in 1.5 (see below on 17.14). (2) They revolt against Babylon – presumably, in the mind of the author, as human agents who unwittingly initiate Divine judgment – plotting and carrying out her utter destruction (17.16).

Finally, John's interest in "the kings of the earth" in this larger section concerned with judgment culminates with a scenario in which both demonic and human forces are arrayed against God and the Lamb. Here this group features prominently in the most

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[150] Aune, *Revelation*, 916, lists the parallel features of these two verses in inverted order. Interestingly, 18.3 adds a third group of Babylon's partners: οἱ ἔμποροι τῆς γῆς ("the merchants of the earth") and inserts πάντα τὰ ἔθνη ("all the nations") in place of οἱ κατοικοῦντες τὴν γῆν. This substitution indicates that the author equates these two terms *at this stage of the visionary narrative* as equally valid ways of referring to humanity, in its antagonistic stance against God, in an all-encompassing sense. This overlapping use of labels for humankind, and their mutual dependence on the language of 14.8, is further evaluated below.

[151] BAGD, "στρηνιάω,"771.

[152] Ruiz, *Ezekiel*, 436-440, and Beale, *Revelation*, 909, have both noted the author's use of the description of Tyre's economic profile in Ezek 27.12-25. Further, they note the similarity of the beginning elements of this list (gold, pearls, jewels, scarlet, purple) with the earlier personification (17.4, Babylon as woman) and later luxurious description (18.16, Babylon as city) of Rome's economy. For the fullest treatments of John's economic critique of Rome, see Kraybill, *Imperial Cult*; also, Bauckham, *Climax*, 338-383.

extensive depiction of a final, cosmic battle (19.17-21). Thus it appears at first glance that from a literary and rhetorical perspective this idiom consistently operates in a pejorative sense. This does not, however, account for the narrative tension created by their seemingly contradictory activity whereby they are depicted as both agents of Babylon's destruction (17.16) and then subsequently, as those who express great sorrow at that very destruction and its implications for their own existence (18.9-10). The reader is presented with a tension in this regard not unlike that of the reappearance of "the kings of the earth" in the New Jerusalem (21.24). With these contextual observations and the remaining tension in mind, it is necessary to provide an evaluation of the use, adaptation and influence of John's various traditional sources.

Narrative Location

Based on the narrative reading of the Apocalypse being adopted by this study (see above, Chapter 4), Rev 17.1-21.8 represents a third major collection of visionary material in the document. It contributes to the overall narrative trajectory by expanding the previously anticipated theme of final judgment (16.14-21). This motif of final judgment has been rehearsed in brief, proleptic visionary descriptions at the climax of each of the three previous cycles of judgment (seals, trumpets, bowls). The author now embarks on a related but distinct narrative direction in which he provides greater detail of and 'theological' explanation for the comprehensive judgment outlined in 16.17-21.[153] He accomplishes this by depicting the destiny of each of the major characters/groups that appear on the landscape of his eschatological map in turn.[154]

The issues raised by the present study demand inquiry into the following aspects of the use of "the kings of the earth" in this collection of judgment visions: an analysis of the literary context within which this cluster of the phrase is located; a determination of what traditions informed the author's use of this idiom and how he may have adapted the idiom in the present collection; and, an evaluation of what theological or rhetorical agenda prompts the author to place "the kings of the earth" so centrally in a vision of

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[153] Several literary signals indicate a new 'movement' in the overall narrative scheme: (1) the presence of an *angelus interpres* (17.1: mediating angel); (2) the ἐν πνεύματι formula coupled with the Seer's relocation εἰς ἔρημον "into the wilderness" (17.3); and, (3) the first instance in Revelation of the common apocalyptic "dream, vision (17.1-6) / interpretation (17.7-18)" form.

[154] These include: Babylon and its partners (17.1-19.10); the Beast, false prophet and "kings of the earth" (19.11-21); Satan (20.1-6); nations and unrepentant inhabitants of the earth (20.7-15); and positively, the community of the faithful (21.1-8). For a fuller description see Chapter 4 (4.4).

Babylon's destruction.[155] Some questions can be posed: Does a consistent picture of these kings emerge in 17.1-21.8? If so, what sort of narrative logic seems to be building contextually toward the final vision of the New Jerusalem?

Traditional Sources

Rev 17.1-2 τῆς πόρνης τῆς μεγάλης...μεθ' ἧς ἐπόρνευσαν οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς

Rev 18.3 οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς μετ' αὐτῆς ἐπόρνευσαν

Rev 18.9 καὶ κλαύσουσιν καὶ κόψονται ἐπ' αὐτὴν οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς οἱ μετ' αὐτῆς πορνεύσαντες καὶ στρηνιάσαντες

The vision of the judgment and fall of Babylon "the great whore" in 17.1-19.10 (initially announced proleptically in 14.8) includes "the kings of the earth" and implicates them for final judgment on the grounds of their πορνεία with her (17.2; 18.3,9) and their participation in her luxurious economic excess (18.9-10).[156] Commentators have recognized that in both chs. 17 and 18 the author makes significant use of two OT prophetic denunciations of Tyre: Isa 23.1-18 and Ezek 26-27.[157] In the first case, 17.2; 18.3,9 all emphasize the "fornication" (i.e. idolatrous political alliance) of these kings and thereby reflect the indictment of Tyre in Isa 23.17: MT "and she prostituted with all the kingdoms of the earth" (וזנתה את כל ממלכות הארץ על־פני האדמה); LXX "and she became a market for all the kingdoms of the world" (καὶ ἔσται ἐμπόριον πάσαις

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[155] In spite of a small number of commentators who attempt to identify 'Babylon' with Jerusalem (for example Ford, *Revelation*, 283-285; Alan James Beagley, *The 'Sitz im Leben' of the Apocalypse with particular reference to the role of the Churches Enemies* [Beiheft zur *ZNW* 50; New York: de Gruyter, 1987], 90-92), the majority consensus that the author has in mind Rome as the leading city of the Roman Empire, which dominated the then-known world politically and economically, remains convincing. For a fuller discussion see especially C. Hunzinger, "Babylon als Deckname für Rom und die Datierung des 1. Petrusbriefes," in *Gottes Wort und Gottes Land: Hans-Wilhelm Hertzberg zum 70. Geburtstag dargebracht von Kollegen, Freunden und Schülern* (Henning Graf, ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 67-77; Ruiz, *Ezekiel*, 270-271.

[156] Several commentators have noted the decidedly different literary and rhetorical approaches of chs. 17 and 18. While ch. 17 functions much more like apocalyptic visionary material, ch. 18 is modelled after OT prophetic taunts/laments. See especially Yarbro-Collins, "Taunt-Song or Dirge?," 185-204.

[157] Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 204, suggests that the several oracles against the nations found in Rev 14-19 are drawn from the OT background of prophetic oracles against Babylon (Jer 50-51) and Tyre (Ezek 26-27). These are further augmented by motifs borrowed from Isaian oracles against Babylon and Tyre. See also Ruiz, *Ezekiel*, 310-312,359-378, who suggests that beyond the important contribution of Ezek 26-28 to the overall construction of this judgment vision, Ezek 20 provides John with the motif of the desert as the place for God's judgment (cf. 17.3 ἀπήνεγκέν με εἰς ἔπημον) and Ezek 16 & 23, both influence the imagery of 17.15-18.

ταῖς βασιλείαις τῆς οἰκουμένης).[158] Clearly the three Revelation texts are dependent upon the MT and yet exhibit two important changes: first, because of the literary precedent the author has set with his use of "the kings of the earth," he adjusts "kingdoms of the earth" (ממלכות האדמה / ταῖς βασιλείαις τῆς οἰκουμένης) in the traditional source to match his already familiar idiom; and secondly, because of the apparently "universal" scope of that idiom, the qualifying "all" (כל / πάσαις) is eliminated.[159] However, this appears to be more than simply a case of adjusting a biblical source to match the idiom. Rather, it seems quite possible that the sharpened focus of the Apocalypse on actual political figures without naming them as such (i.e. existing institutional and cultic offices and/or actual historical individuals) may in fact be driving its interpretive strategy.

The construction of 17.2 and 18.3 as parallel verses reveals a conflation of Isaiah 23.17 with Jeremiah 51.7 (LXX 28.7).[160] From the latter it is the motif of the nations "being drunk with her wine" (cf.14.8)[161] which is employed in 17.2 and 18.3. The author of Revelation includes this second traditional source as a way of providing further evidence for the judgment of Babylon and describing the complicity of the nations in her sins. As with Isaiah 23.17 noted above, the Jeremiah text also appears to provide the author of Revelation some license to incorporate the idiom under consideration. Two

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[158] Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 211-212.

[159] While one cannot make the assumption in any given textual instance that the author of Revelation was working with both MT and LXX textual traditions, the LXX reading of ἐμπόριον in Isa 23.17 presents interesting possibilities in several directions: (1) the fact that the cognate ἔμπορος is used of the significant "third group" of those who participate in fornication with Babylon (18.3,11,15,23 – these four nom. pl. uses and one dat. sg. in Matt.13.25 constitute all of the term's appearances in the NT); (2) the fact that onomatopoeic similarities exist with the conceptually crucial πορνεία/πορνεύω word group in chs. 17-18; (3) the possibility that although the LXX translators appear to mute the sexual overtones of the Isaiah passage, they may well be employing an idiom which had cultic/sexual overtones in its own right (see Beale, *Revelation*, 849-50).

[160] The first part of Jer 51.7 כוס־זהב בבל ביד־יהוה "Babylon (is) a golden cup of wine in the hand of Yahweh" also provides the imagery for the subsequent description of Babylon in 17.5 in which *she* holds a golden cup full of the abominations of her fornication in *her* hand (ἔχουσα ποτήριον χρυσοῦν ἐν τῇ χειρῇ αὐτῆς γέμον βδελυγμάτων).

[161] See 14.10; 16.19; 19.15 for instances where the author of Revelation reverses this image to reflect not the seduction of Babylon but rather God's wrath as the wine which Babylon and the rest of the opponents of God are made to drink (cf. 15.7; Isa 51.7; Jer 25.15; Ps 75.9 [74.9]; *Pss. Sol.*8.14). In either usage, the drunkenness of those who 'drink' reflects their inability to resist the seduction of Babylon on the one hand, and the wrath of God on the other hand; see Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 205-206. Fekkes also rightly points out that these two images are merged in 18.6 where the judgment is passed on Babylon that "in the cup which she mixed, mix her (a) double portion."

important observations may be made with regard to the insertion of "the kings of the earth" in these two texts: (1) the term הארץ in its unqualified state in the MT (LXX γῆς) likely provided the linguistic stimulus for including οἱ βασιλεῖς; and, (2) a striking variation of this idiom is inserted in the expanded translation of *Targum of Jeremiah* 51.7, indicating at least the possibility that the rhetorical force of this text was already being sharpened in this way in early Jewish thought.[162] Even with these linguistic and traditional possibilities in the background, however, John nevertheless reveals his own agenda of polemically raising the stakes against those whom he deems responsible for society's participation in the values and immoral demands of Rome. Such an interpretive "move" is interesting precisely because it appears to take place with both traditional sources which have been woven together in 17.2 and 18.3 – this appropriation of the former being further illustrated on a third occasion in 18.9. One is led to conclude that the author is looking for ways to implicate "the kings of the earth" beyond simply finding them at hand in the sources with which he is working. Thus, 17.2, 18.3 and 18.9-10 all contribute to an intentionally pejorative 'framing' of this group and reflect the perspective of an author who is going out of his way to make this point.

With graphic, polemically charged imagery, these kings are then depicted as prominent among those who mourn (κλαύσουσιν καὶ κόψονται[163]) the sudden destruction of Babylon – a turn of events which also signals their doom (18.9-10). The imagery which frames the lament of "the kings of the earth" is modelled on Isaiah 23.8-9 where the terms 'merchants' and 'rulers / princes of the earth' are used synonymously of Tyre's 'honoured men / nobility': MT "whose rulers / princes are traders, honoured merchants of the earth" (אשר סחריה שרים כנעינה נכבדי־ארץ); LXX "her merchants [are] the glorious rulers of the earth" (οἱ ἔμποροι αὐτῆς ἔνδοξοι ἄρχοντες τῆς γῆς). At the same time, the denunciation of Tyre in Ezekiel 27.33-35 provides a

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[162] R. Hayward, *The Targum to Jeremiah: Translated, with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus, and Notes* (ArBib 12; Martin NcNamara, ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), 184-185. *Tg. Jer.* 51.7 expands the text to "all *the kings of the nations* (כל מלכי עממיא) *are about to be* inebriated from *her with languor*, and the nations shall drink (ישתון עממיא) *from the cup of her punishment*: therefore the nations shall be confused (ישתגשון עממיא)" thus providing a traditional linking of both "the kings of the nations" and the "nations," which is precisely what the author of Revelation does in 17.2 and 18.3.

[163] This second verb, used for the activity of "the kings of the earth" in response to the destruction of Babylon, occurs elsewhere in the NT with this meaning only in 1.7 and Matt 24.30, where on both occasions the language of Zech 12.10 is employed to describe reaction to the parousia.

further variation of this tradition in which "the kings of the earth" are bound up in the pronouncement of judgment: ברב הוניך ומערביך העשרת מלכי־ארץ "with your abundant wealth and merchandise you enriched the kings of the earth." This second source also provides a list of merchandise (Ezek 27.12-25) that served as a model for John's own list immediately following the present text in 18.12-13.[164]

In Isaiah 23 the prophet envisioned the judging activity of the Lord to include the humbling of "all the glorious ones / things" (MT כל־נכבדי־ארץ; LXX πᾶν ἔνδοξον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς) – a virtual repetition in both the MT and LXX of the substantive adjectives. In Revelation, John applies his understanding of these titles to those whom he includes in the class of "oppressive power-brokers." In this way it might be said that he not only adapts the labels in the Isaianic oracle to fit his rhetorically charged idiom, he also provides a graphic example of the oracle's prophetic threat to "humble" those individuals. The second point of association between the kings and Babylon – economic excess – triggers a lament which is modelled on a similar outcry over the destruction of Tyre in Ezekiel 26.16-18 by "all the princes of the sea" (MT כל נשיאי הים / LXX πάντες οἱ ἄρχοντες ἐκ τῶν ἐθνῶν τῆς θαλάσσης). How this idiom of the rulers of the world may have shaped John's own idiom – indeed, whether it did in light of his simultaneous use of Isaiah 23 – is open to debate. If the phrase "all the princes of the sea" did influence John, the likely scenario is that he inverted and replaced הים (the sea) with τῆς γῆς (the earth) to maintain his well established idiom.[165] The interesting LXX expansion of τῶν ἐθνῶν (the nations) also presents possibilities in terms of the fact that 18.3 links the nations with the kings as participants in Babylon's doomed existence (17.2 links "the inhabitants of the earth" – in *this* case a synonym for the nations – with these kings).

In light of the multiple linguistic triggers for the idiom "the kings of the earth" in these traditional sources, it seems unnecessary to choose one at the expense of the cumulative evidence of the others. Rather, the thoroughly pejorative presentation of these human rulers in biblical traditions provides the author of Revelation with the rhetorical

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[164] Bauckham, *Climax*, 371-372.
[165] Ruiz, *Ezekiel*, 415-416.

license to cast them in no uncertain negative terms. Including and implicating "the kings of the earth" in the scenes of Babylon's judgment not only confirms and explains their antagonistic presence in Revelation's previous scenes of final judgment (6.15-17; 16.14-21), but also further justifies and anticipates the fuller depiction of their judgment and ultimate destruction (17.14; 19.17-21).

Rev 17.14; 19.16 ὄνομα γεγραμμένον· Βασιλεὺς βασιλέων

Two instances in Revelation present an important variation on the larger theme of 'kingship' and specifically to the present phrase under consideration. In both 17.14 and 19.16 the exalted Christ is described as "king of kings" (βασιλεὺς βασιλέων).[166] Several observations make the placement of this Christological designation significant for the present discussion: (1) the reference either to "kings" or "the kings of the earth" occurs in its immediate literary context (17.12,16; 19.18,19); (2) in both cases this designation occurs within contexts where the exalted Christ is depicted in the language and images of the Divine Warrior; (3) in both cases "the kings of the earth" are actively gathered for war against this warrior figure; (4) in both cases the outcome of this confrontation is a decisive rout by the Divine warrior which appears to confirm his right to this title; and, (5) the absence of the qualifying τῆς γῆς in 17.12,16 is actually matched by a similar unqualified reference to "kings" in 19.18 which there obviously anticipates the full idiom in 19.19. These common features strongly suggest that the author has the same referents in mind in both cases in spite of the fact that the idiom in question is only complete in the second text.

The effect of this designation for the exalted Christ in the context of an eschatological battle scene is that it recalls the titular description ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς from 1.5 and now gives it a specified context – military conquest. Further, the association of "the kings of the earth" in both instances with Satanic opposition to God (17.12; 19.19) singles out the Divine Warrior as the only worthy bearer

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[166] The only other NT occurrence of this idiom in 1 Tim 6.16 where the construction is more pedantic ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν βασιλευόντων ("the king of those who rule") and the context seems to suggest a formulaic origin for this description of the risen Christ. In an interesting parallel to the first of the three Christological titles in 1.5, 1 Tim 6.13 refers to Jesus as τοῦ μαρτυρήσαντος ἐπὶ Ποντίου Πιλάτου τὴν καλὴν ὁμολογίαν.

of the title Βασιλεύς.[167] Such a designation based both on the valid claim to authority and its thorough enactment, reflects a common OT motif. The oracle against Tyre in Ezekiel 26 contains both language and context that corresponds to these scenes of the defeat of "the kings of the earth." In the validation of Nebuchadnezzar by God as the one who will carry out his judgment against Tyre, Ezekiel 26.7 describes him as מלך מלכים / βασιλεὺς βασιλέων. Thus within the traditions at John's disposal, a description of the agent of God's just judgment against political and economic world dominion is used which could both elevate the 'political' status of the Divine Warrior and rehearse yet again the vain attempts of human political rulers to achieve ultimate superiority.

Rev 17.15-16

Ironically, although their apparent dismay at Babylon's destruction is so described (18.9-10), these "kings" are also situated at the centre of the conflict, which from a human, political perspective precipitates that destruction (17.15-16). How can these kings first of all suffer defeat at the hands of the Divine Warrior (17.12-14), and then proceed to cooperate in the destruction of Babylon, and finally be seen to mourn her sudden demise? Some commentators have attempted to resolve the tension by suggesting that the author had two different kinds or categories of "kings" in mind.[168] It should be noted that this 'tension' is not so different in kind from that of the visions of the destruction of the kings of the earth (19.17-21) and their presence in the New Jerusalem (21.24,26). In the present case, John's use of mutually exclusive traditions appears to necessitate an overlapping use of language and imagery.

In the first instance the vision of the Beast with ten horns (17.3,12-13) is explained by the *angelus interpres* as being representative of Rome. This appears to be the case both in light of the equating of 'the seven hills are seven kings' (17.9-10) and the fact that the Beast with ten horns in Daniel 7 is also described as "the fourth kingdom of the earth" (Dan 7.23-24). The second scene portraying the reaction of "the kings of the earth" to the burning of Babylon (18.9-10) is based on the tradition of the judgment of

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[167] Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 313 states, "John's use of the plural to describe human rulers involves both an understanding of human authority, of who holds power in this world, and at the same time a relativization of its status. By comparison with the singular authority of God, which is at work in Christ, the authority of human kings is no authority at all...as 17.16-17 shows, human power serves the divine purpose even when it does not mean to do so."

[168] Most notably Charles, Allo, Ladd, Mounce, Beasley-Murray, and Swete.

Tyre in Ezekiel 26-28 (esp. Ezek 27.33-35) and the lament of the kings is *not their own* – the speaker who attributes this outcry to them is in fact God himself (cf.18.4-5). Ruiz suggests, therefore, that the different traditional sources, different compositional genres, and different narrators reflect a situation where the author offers two different perspectives of the same event.[169] Thus, to reconstruct a chronology of events, or to determine distinct referents for each use of the "kings" idioms, is simply outside the author's frame of reference and misses the symbolic world he is creating with these overlapping images and terms.

Rev 17.18 ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη ἡ ἔχουσα βασιλείαν ἐπὶ τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς

This text presents one point of particular interest: its both parallel and antithetical character over against 1.5. In its literary context, 17.18 both explains an element of the earlier vision (17.1-8) and stands in narrative dissonance to the immediately preceding description of Christ as "king of kings" (17.12-14). Here John combines three images of rulership: Babylon's apparent (present) authority over "the kings of the earth"; her destruction at their hands (17.15-17); and the determinative rule of God over both Babylon and the kings. Thus the end of the vision in chapter 17 provides the detail for the christological title in 1.5. Narratively speaking, this motif has come full circle in John's visionary material.

Rev 19.17-21 φάγητε σάρκας βασιλέων...εἶδον θηρίον καὶ τοὺς βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς καὶ τὰ στρατεύματα αὐτῶν

To this point in the third collection of visions primarily concerned with the judgment of various players in the eschatological drama (17.1-21.8), "the kings of the earth" have featured prominently but indirectly. While 'Babylon' has been the focal point of blame and judgment, "the kings of the earth" have been implicitly indicted by the author on the grounds of participation in the value system and abuse of power with which the Roman Empire is characterized (17.2; 18.3). Further, they have contributed to the downfall of this system (17.15-16) and then ironically been depicted as being foremost among those who mourn its destruction (18.9-10).

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[169] Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 415-417.

Literary Context

The author's escalating polemic against "the kings of the earth" comes to a climax in the vision of their "final" military assault against the Warrior Lamb and his forces in 19.17-21. This textual unit,[170] preceded by a description of the exalted Christ as 'Warrior Lamb' (19.11-16), gathers together and expands important motifs found in earlier descriptions of battle at the final judgment.[171] As already noted above, the list of the gathered opponents of God in 19.18 bears marked similarity to the list of 6.15 and suggests that this is more than a "stock apocalyptic feature." Here we have indications that the rhetorical agenda of the author is intentionally and consistently applied. These labels are intended to arouse negative connotations and vilify their human referents. Moreover, there are certain creative adjustments in this second list which further illustrate the rhetorical slant of the author's use of such labels: by reversing the order of the terms χιλιάρχων and ἰσχυρῶν and inserting further military imagery ἵππων καὶ τῶν καθημένων ἐπ' αὐτῶν "of horses and those seated on them (= riders)," an even stronger confrontational and antagonistic sentiment is aroused. These terms and their contextual nuancing create a symbolic field within which the author expects his idiom "the kings of the earth" to be understood. Secondly, in 19.19-20 the cooperation between these human opponents of God and demonic forces, as previously depicted in 16.13-14, sets this conflict not only onto a final 'earthly' stage, but more importantly reveals a cosmology which operates at the same time on a higher sphere of ultimate cosmic reality. Thirdly, the preceding textual unit describing the parousia of the Warrior Lamb also incorporated several features that evoke earlier descriptions of final judgment: (1) the wrath of God (19.15; cf. 6.15; 14.14-16; 16.19); (2) the imagery of the winepress and the fury of God (19.15; cf. 14.14-20); (3) the titular description of the Lamb as King of Kings (19.16; cf. 17.12-14). All of this suggests that through an expansion of detail and a drawing together of various motifs concerning the final judgment, 19.11-21 (particularly 19.17-21) serves

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[170] See Aune, *Revelation*, 1047, who cites two particular features that speak for 19.17-21 as a self-contained textual unit: (1) the introductory phrase καὶ εἶδον ἕνα ἄγγελον in 19.17 virtually parallel to καὶ εἶδον ἄγγελον in 20.1; and, (2) the reference in both verses 17 and 21 to birds (τοῖς ὀρνέοις / τὰ ὄρνεα). Note also the earlier use of καὶ εἶδον in 19.11 to signal the beginning of the textual unit 19.11-16.

[171] Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 192-199, suggests that many commentators have recognized the links between the visions of 14.14-20 and 19.11-21.

as a climactic restatement of the ultimate victory of God over specific groups aligned against him through the messianic agency of the exalted Christ.[172]

Traditional Sources

Describing the indebtedness of this textual unit to traditional sources means untangling to some degree, a conflation of themes, motifs and images purposely fused by the author. Unquestionably, Psalm 2 functions as an overarching tradition, providing John with several important themes (*Excursus Three*). These include: the confrontation between God and the powerful rulers of humanity and his ultimate sovereignty, the exercise of his justice by a messianic agent, and the threat of impending doom against those who persist in rebellion. In light of the paradigmatic function of this Psalm, it is not surprising that from within those larger themes important linguistic signals support the rhetorical platform of Revelation. In both ways, Psalm 2 is influential in the present text. In 19.19 "the kings of the earth...having been gathered together" (οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς...συνηγμένα) presents a direct parallel with Psalm 2.2 (LXX).[173] The motif of being gathered for war appears elsewhere in Revelation (16.13-14; 20.7-8), and in all three cases the agents of the gathering are either demonically inspired forces or Satan.[174] Importantly, John had already used Psalm 2.9 in describing the Divine Warrior from whose mouth "comes a sharp sword in order to strike down the nations" (19.15).[175] The use of these motifs from Psalm 2 at this stage in Revelation's narrative development, makes the interpretive reading of the psalm by the author clear: the nations ultimately did not heed the warning of Psalm 2.10-12 by which they might have averted such fate.[176]

The motif of the dual destruction of demonic and human forces suggests a further related OT tradition is at work in this text. Their cooperation (demonic deception *and* human initiative) against the Lord in a final onslaught is a new, but not entirely

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[172] Although a more generic "final" perspective of this event occurs subsequently in 20.7-11, where the closest link to the military imagery of 16.14-21 and 19.17-21 may be found in the language of "marching up"(ἀναβαίνω).

[173] While 19.19 uses the perfect passive participle, Ps 2.2 uses the aorist passive συνήχθησαν.

[174] This motif is frequently reflected in both OT and apocalyptic traditions: Isa 13.4-5; Ezek 38.14-16; 39.2; Joel 4.2; Zech 12.2-3,9; 14.2; *1 En.* 56.5-6; 90.13-19; 4 Ezra 13.5,8-11,33-38; *Pss. Sol.* 2.1-2; 17.22-23; 1QM 1.10-11; 15.2-3.

[175] Beale, *Revelation*, 968.

[176] *Contra* Bauckham, *Climax*, 314, who attempts to argue that appearance of "the kings of the earth" in the New Jerusalem (21.24) indicates that they accepted the warning and did indeed "serve the Lord." Such a reading almost certainly cannot be sustained if Ps 2 is in view in 19.17-21 but not in 21.24-26 (see below).

unexpected development. This breadth of judgment reflects the dual referent of the oracle concerning the Day of the Lord in Isaiah 24.21. While not providing exact linguistic parallels, this oracle nevertheless presents an important conceptual link to judgment of *both* parties: "It will come to pass on that day, the Lord will visit upon the host of heaven in heaven (על־צבא המרום במרום) and all the kings of the earth on earth (וכל מלכי האדמה על־האדמה)." Here both human rulers and the demonic spirits, which have manipulated their joint uprising against God, are summarily dispensed with.[177] Once again the negative expectations regarding the fate of human political rulers raised by this traditional source appear to be confirmed by its development in Revelation.

As a textual unit, 19.17-21 reflects the descriptions of eschatological battle in Ezekiel 38-39. The symbolic similarities of 19.17-18 with Ezekiel 39.17-18 may be summarized as: (1) the call to all the "birds" (cf. Ezek 39.4) to (2) a sacrificial "feast" at which (3) they are invited to eat the flesh[178] (4) of various representatives of human political might.[179] Not only did John taken up this tradition, which includes an idiom similar to his own (MT נשיאי הארץ / LXX ἀρχόντων τῆς γῆς), he purposely inverted its order of appearance in his list (last in Ezek 39.18 but first in Rev 19.18,19) both to match his previous list (6.15) and to highlight their significance in his communicative strategy. By emphasizing "the kings of the earth" in this way, their negative portrayal in Psalm 2 is reaffirmed and portrayed with the finality of images evoked by OT traditions of the Day of the Lord.

In summary, the use of this designation in 17.1-19.21 reflects a variety of traditional sources. Moreover, it serves a number of related, yet distinct, motifs in the overall narrative logic of this collection of "judgment visions." There is, however, a consistently negative rhetorical polemic, which shapes each instance of the phrase.

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[177] Surprisingly, Fekkes' study on the Isaianic traditions in Revelation, while noting the important parallels between the description of the messianic king in Isa 11.2-4 and that of the Divine Warrior in Rev 19.11-16, neglects to see the conceptual indebtedness of John to the Isaianic vision of the judgment of both spirit and human powers.

[178] The image of the "feast" to which God (and Israel's) enemies are gathered may be an intentional reversal of fortunes based on a similar depiction of Israel's slaughter at the hand of their oppressors (cf. Ps 79.2-6 [78.2-6]). The cry for vengeance against "nations who do not know you and kingdoms which do not call on your name" is also an instructive reverse motif of the same tradition.

[179] Aune, *Revelation* 1047-48, 1063-64, and Beale, *Revelation*, 966 suggest that Ezek 38-39 emerges as the preferable choice (over Dan 2.7-12) in light of the concern in both 19.11-21 and the Ezekiel visions for the vindication of God's holy name.

Further, the variegated narrative roles of this idiom (i.e. lack of chronological or even logical consistency) within this textual section of Revelation, seems to signal an approach to appropriating traditions by the author that may helpfully inform an evaluation of its final instance in 21.24-26.

5.5.5.6 Rev 21.24-26 οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς φέρουσιν τὴν δόξαν αὐτῶν εἰς αὐτήν

Literary Context

Within the overall narrative logic of Revelation, 21.24-26 functions as part of the author's final detailed description of the conditions initiated by the decisive defeat of the enemies of God and "judgment" (vindication) for his people. In doing so, he expands the details of the preliminary vision of the new heaven and new earth (21.1-8) by describing first the outward features of the New Jerusalem (21.9-21) and then portraying the inward 'living conditions' of that city (21.22-22.5).[180] The literary construction and conventions of this vision suggest its primary narrative function to be the climactic point at which several recurring themes in the document are gathered up and brought to final resolution. These include: the intentional contrast of the eschatological city to the vision of the city Babylon (17.1-18.24); a fuller portrayal of previous epigrammatic visions of the final destiny of the faithful communities (7.9-17; 11.15-18; 15.2-4); and, the comprehensive imaging of the eschatological promises – including several specific symbols and motifs – directed to the communities (2.1-3.22). The author's purpose in 21.9-22.5 appears to be no less than drawing together all of these themes and narrative trajectories into one all-encompassing final vision.

In the immediate literary context surrounding 21.24-26, the author offers the following details concerning the New Jerusalem: there is no visible temple (21.22),[181] the

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[180] Müller, *Offenbarung*, 356; see also Chapter 4 (above) on structure and narrative development.

[181] At this point the author of Revelation departs from Jewish apocalyptic counterparts who almost univocally envisioned a restored Temple in the future age (Tob 13.11-17; 4 Ezra 10.27,39-53). The closest parallel may be the ambiguous description in *AA* (*1 En.* 90.25-29) where the allegorical symbols used by the author leave a somewhat unclear picture of whether or not he anticipates a restored Temple. Ultimately one cannot argue from silence that the author of *AA* abandons such an otherwise standard apocalyptic expectation (see further section 3.5.3 above), thereby placing this feature of the New Jerusalem in Rev 21 on its own in this regard (see Deutsch, "Transformation," 115, who cites Bousset and Lohmeyer). Beale, *Revelation*, 1090-1092, suggests that John did not see a physical temple but then affirms that one exists (re-constituted in God and the Lamb). Aune, *Revelation*, 1166-1168, holds that the author is obviously working with traditions which *did* envision a physical temple; hence, the unexpected development that none exists suggests redactional activity reflecting a more distinctive Christian view than traditional Jewish apocalyptic.

glory of God / Lamb are the light source of the city (21.23), the gates of the city are never shut (21.25), and no unclean person or thing will ever enter the city (21.27). These themes are then rephrased in a complimentary restatement in 22.1-5 with language reminiscent of the biblical traditions of Eden: this city is the place of continual fruitfulness and health (22.1-2) and the absence of curse or darkness (22.3,5), and the closest relationship between God and his people (2.4). How might these features taken together offer some clue as to the function of "the nations" and "the kings of the earth"?

Narrative Location

Chapter 2 documented the significant interpretive difficulties raised by this particular text in the history of research on the Apocalypse of John.[182] The highly debated element is the surprising presence of "the kings of the earth" (along with "the nations") whom the author pejoratively critiqued throughout the visionary judgment scenes (see above) and whose final destruction he graphically and unsympathetically portrayed (19.17-21; 20.9,12-15). Source critics generally assumed that the author's crude merging of traditional and apocalyptic material brought with it superfluous symbols and images that did not represent or anticipate any literal enactment of their content. Alternatively, other commentators attributed the symbolic tension to the later editorial blunders of a redactor(s), which distorted the author's originally coherent condemnation of "the kings of the earth".[183] Readings emphasizing the use of traditional material have often capitulated to an older view of apocalyptic literature that simply admitted its ability to hold inconsistencies in tension. Attempts to recognize a symbolic or allegorical use of OT imagery have either assumed a "transformation of symbols"[184] or a "spiritualized" interpretation:[185] in either case these kings are understood to be members of the believing community (cf. 1.6; 5.9; 20.4-6; 22.4-5).[186] Finally, a small number of commentators have suggested that the author had literal fulfilment of this vision in view and that this last appearance of "the kings of the earth" serves as his final, authoritative word on their

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[182] Aune, *Revelation*, 1171, expresses the tension.
[183] R.H. Charles, *Revelation*, 2 :146-149,172-173.
[184] Celia Deutsch, "Transformation of Symbols: The New Jerusalem in Rv.21.1-22.5," *ZNW* (1987): 106-126, who coined this term and very briefly addressed the symbol of the "kings of the earth."
[185] See especially Kiddle, *Revelation*, 438; Mounce, *Revelation*, 384-385.
[186] See Chapter 2's survey of the most influential treatments of this problematic text.

fate – positive evidence that a final, universal moment of conversion takes place in the eschatological future.[187]

Recognition of the literary mirror imaging of the two cities (Babylon and the New Jerusalem) in 17.1-22.5 has become one of the (few) moments of large-scale consensus among commentators.[188] A direct and corresponding contrast between these cities is intended by the author both on the level of his larger ethical and moral agenda and also in terms of the aesthetic details with which each is described. One may safely say that each respective 'city vision' cannot be adequately understood apart from the other.[189] The way in which this contrast is achieved is both by employing literary features common to both visions and by intentionally juxtaposed visionary elements that illustrate the divergent characters of the cities.[190] The author's decisions regarding which images and symbols he incorporated in each respective vision appear to have been determined not only by the symbolic material provided by his traditional sources but also through a careful consideration of how they might best portray what he deems to be the moral and theological dissonance of these cities' characters.[191] In the case of the second vision, it appears that certain details may be included exclusively on the grounds that they provide an anti-type for an image or symbol present in the first vision. One of the tasks of this inquiry will be to determine whether the inclusion of "the kings of the earth" as just such a symbol is the best reading of the evidence.

The natural point of departure lies in the activity of the kings in the vision of Babylon. Their categorical impurity and antagonism to the Lamb is illustrated with

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[187] Caird, *Revelation* 259,279,297-300; Bauckham, *Climax* 225,241,312-313 (see Chapter 2, above); Sweet, *Revelation*, 308-309; Michaels, *Revelation*, 245-246.

[188] See C. Giblin, "Structural and Thematic Correlations in the Theology of Revelation," *Bib* 55 (1974): 487-504, for the most detailed comparative analysis of the visions of these two women /cities in Revelation; also summarized in Aune, *Revelation*, 1143-1146. E. Humphries, *The Ladies and the Cities*, 107-108,114-115, while more interested in a comparison of the women in Rev 12 and 21, nevertheless recognizes the function of Babylon as a foil for the New Jerusalem.

[189] While virtually all commentators agree on this point in principle at the surface level of the text, see Müller, *Offenbarung*, 356, who suggests regarding 21.9-22.5: „Auf den ersten Blick wirken die einzelnenVisionzüge vielleicht fremdartig und starr. Doch gewinnen sie sofort Leben, wenn man erkennt, daß hier das verklärte Gegenbild zur irdischen Stadt Babylon = Rom erscheint..."

[190] Caird, *Revelation*, 262, poetically states: "Here is the real source of John's prophetic certainty, for only in comparison with the New Jerusalem can the queenly splendours of Babylon be recognized as the seductive gauds of an old and raddled whore."

[191] Deutsch, "Transformation," 122-124, provides a comparative chart outlining those features common to both "city visions." Similarities exist at the level of linguistic parallels and literary construction while the symbolic intent of the author is a stark contrast between the two cities.

images of economic excess and the idolatry of misplaced allegiance – the severity of which is highlighted by the author's use of a metaphor of illicit sexual conduct. The vision of the New Jerusalem also includes the "kings of the earth"; however, in contrast to the earlier Babylon vision, they now contribute to the wealth, vitality and splendour of the city and conduct themselves in keeping with the purity and peace of the eschatological city (at least by contextual implication, 21.8,27; 22.5). Behaviour is attributed to them, which reflects an antithetical ethical and moral predisposition to that with which they were characterized in the vision of Babylon. No longer do they plunder and revel in material excess – rather they bring δόξα "glory" and τιμή "wealth" *into* the New Jerusalem. Thus the intentional reversal of the role and function of "the kings of the earth" sets into stark relief the divergent characters of the two cities. The vision of the New Jerusalem (large, open, pure and brimming with wealth and vitality) dwarfs and shames Babylon with its gaudy excess, corruption and ruin. The intended rhetorical impact is to commend the city of the future to the faithful community as a vision of ultimate reality against present day Rome in all its apparent glory and might.

Traditional Sources

The primary traditional source of indebtedness for the linguistic and symbolic crafting of the second part of the New Jerusalem vision has generally been attributed to a blending of Isaianic traditions (Isa 60.3-5,11,19-20).[192] While such recognition is widespread, several important issues remain largely unanswered. What type of existence and status do the Isaiah texts actually anticipate for the "kings" to whom they refer? How were these texts interpreted and incorporated into a living tradition that may have been available to John? Evidence of some coherent reading of this text in early Judaism emerges from a comparative analysis of several important sources. If the data from these

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[192] Aune, *Revelation*, 1171; Beale, *Revelation*, 1094-5, also includes Isa 2.2,5. Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 265, suggests that in the larger context of Rev 21 the author is "consciously building upon New Jerusalem prophecies" by borrowing architectural imagery from Isa 54 and then describing the inward living conditions of the city from Isa 60. He observes, "...since none of the prophecies in Isa 55-59 are directed to Zion, these two chapters are thematically contiguous." Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation*, 111, suggests that Ezek 37-48 represents the primary locus of traditional material that the author used to create the larger vision of the New Jerusalem (21.1-22.5). J. Lust, "The Order of the Final Events in Revelation and in Ezekiel," in *L'Apocalyptique*, 179-183, has shown that John is likely aware of two editions of Ezek 37-48 from which he shaped the larger narrative structure of Rev 20-22. However, while there are certain features with respect to the setting and frame of this vision that owe their conceptual roots to Ezekiel, the bulk of the imagery and linguistic content in 21.24-26 is dependent upon the Isaianic visions of the future Jerusalem. Deutsch, "Transformation," 114, points out both similarities and differences between Ezekiel and Isaiah.

sources may be taken as witnesses to a coherent traditional interpretation of Isaiah 60, what seems to be the best reading of the evidence regarding John's use of Isaiah – especially in 21.24-26? Finally, in light of the earlier dependence of the author of Revelation upon Solomonic traditions in 1.5, may any conceptual links be made to Isaiah 60 and the particular interpretive reading of it that Revelation appears to reflect?

The data from Isaiah 60 reveals an eschatological perspective, which is undeniably universal in scope and effect. That alone, however, does not necessarily qualify it as being "universalist" as that term relates to the conversion and participation of Gentiles in the future age.[193] As a loosely connected collection of visions largely concerned with eschatological fulfilment, Isaiah 60-66 reflects a primary concern for the final restoration of God's people. Although the main subject of these visions appears to shift between "Israel" as the people and "Jerusalem" as representative of them, the inclusion of "nations," "kings," "kingdoms," and "islands" as players in the drama of restoration appears to serve the rhetorical purpose of vindication. Throughout these visions, the motif of the recognition (affirmation) and subservience of the nations of the world is intended to portray the eschatological reversal of Israel's misery at their hands in the present age. The ways in which this motif is elaborated may be classified in at least three distinct, but overlapping, categories of language: (1) the language of repatriation to the land (and specifically Jerusalem) of the exiles – most often referred to in terms of 'children / descendants / generations'; (2) the language of economy – a restoration of wealth and prosperity (60.5-11,13,16-17a; 61.5-6; 66.12); (3) the language of acknowledgment and pre-eminent status (60.3,6b,14-15; 61.8-11; 62.1-2; 64.1-2; 66.18-20). This final category moves in two related directions: the nations and kings of the world acknowledge Israel's God as Lord, and recognize Israel's own status as his people in the world. In a related motif these Isaianic visions also assert the destruction of those nations and kings who remain uncooperative with this program of vindication (60.12; 63.1-6; 66.17-18). On the whole, the rhetorical perspective of Isaiah 60 is predominantly concerned with the restoration and rebuilding of Israel – vindication is paramount.

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[193] Mathewson, "Destiny," 131 n.35, also recognizes this point with respect to several Isaianic texts, which employ language with universal scope but perhaps, denote "involuntary worship." He suggests Isa 41.20; 49.7,23; 52.15; 60.11; 66.18-24.

Excursus Four: Isaiah 60 in Two Early Jewish Documents

The presence of nations and their kings as witnesses to the eschatological restoration and vindication of the people of God is a theme articulated by the prophets. An important aspect of understanding how the author of Revelation may have interpreted Isaiah 60 in 21.23-26 is to evaluate other roughly contemporary examples of similar efforts. The brief study of M. Wilcox[194] represents the most serious recent attempt to evaluate 21.24 against similar Isaianic exegesis in other documents representing early Jewish traditions. His primary suggestions are *Targum Isaiah* and 1QM 12.12b-14, along with interesting features found in 'New Jerusalem' texts from Qumran.[195] Regarding the manuscripts of Isaiah found at Qumran (specifically *1QIsa*^{a} and *1QIsa*^{b}) there are no significant variants to speak of.[196]

a. The Isaiah Targum[197]

Targum Isaiah, as a possible point of dialogue and comparison with the exegetical strategies and interpretive grid of the author of Revelation, presents complexity in several important areas. To speak of such features as "author" (= meturgeman) and "date" misrepresents to some degree the evolution and function of the Targumim as collections of rabbinic thought over a period of many generations. In the case of *Targum Isaiah*, internal evidence such as possible references to historical situations and various examples of 'interpretive layers' suggests a lengthy composition history.[198] No direct literary relationship between *Targum Isaiah* and Revelation can reasonably be argued; certain historical references and interpretive tendencies, however, indicate the possibility that a common interpretive stream contemporary (or subsequent) to John is represented in the Targum.[199]

Of particular interest in the theological agenda of *Targum Isaiah* is not only the way in which the actual language of Isaiah 60 is appropriated and modified, but perhaps more importantly what kind of overall perspective of "kings" as foreign political rulers – and Gentiles generally – may be discerned. From the outset, it appears that wherever possible, the meturgeman sharpens the focus of those Isaianic visions, which employ general rhetoric against Israel's opponents (i.e. those who have subjugated them and plundered Jerusalem), upon Gentile referents in an intentionally polemical fashion.[200] This interpretive strategy holds true in *Targum Isaiah* 60.2-3,5,10,11,16 where the text is expanded both with greater detail regarding the material restoration of Jerusalem (i.e. "wealth" in vv.5,11,16) and with the inclusion of the specifying language of "Gentiles" and (their) "kings" (vv.10,11,16). This suggests that these additions signal both the interpretive strategy of clarifying more general or abstract ideas and motifs present in the

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[194] M. Wilcox, "Tradition and Redaction of Rev 21,9-22,5," in *L'Apocalyptique*, 205-215 (esp. 210-215).
[195] Wilcox, "Tradition," 213-214, where he lists: 1Q32, 2Q24, 5Q15 and 11QT.
[196] D. Barthélemy & J.T. Milik, *Qumran Cave 1* (DJD 1; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 66-67.
[197] The following discussion of *Tg. Isa.* is based on Bruce D. Chilton, *The Isaiah Targum: Introduction, Translation, Apparatus and Notes* (ArBib 11; Martin McNamara, ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), xiii-xxxv,116-117.
[198] Chilton, *Isaiah Targum*, xx-xxv.
[199] Chilton argues for a reading of the Targum which recognizes two main levels or phases of interpretive strata: Tannaitic (earlier) and Amoraic (later). He suggests that while these levels cannot be categorically separated, they nevertheless provide a spectrum of data (historical and interpretive) that ranges from the first cent. C.E. to the fourth cent. CE. One example of this kind of variety may be seen in references to the Temple: on the one hand, *Tg. Isa.* 29.1-3 appears to depict its destruction, while *Tg. Isa.* 22.15-25; 28.1-4 imply its existence by virtue of disputes regarding the priestly hierarchy (Chilton, *Isaiah Targum*, xxiv).
[200] See for example: *Tg. Isa.* 2.13; 10.27; 14.18; 16.8; 18.5; 25.12; 26.13; 27.4-5; 28.2,13,17,25; 30.32; 32.1,19; 33.4,7,11; 34.1; 41.11,15,25; 42.7; 45.24; 49.6-7; 49.23; 52.14-15; 53.7-8; 54.15; 56.9-10. In several cases, the Targumic reading actually seems to overturn the sense of the MT: *Tg. Isa.* 49.6-7; 53.7-8. This specific observation appears to hold true for the larger interpretive strategy of Isa 53 in its entirety.

MT, as well as a theological and rhetorical interest in "framing" Israel's opponents. Thus one notes the following changes to the text of Isaiah 60 (italics indicate those changes in *Targum Isaiah* that are especially significant for the present discussion):

> 60.5 "for the wealth of the sea will be changed over to you, and the wealth of the nations will come to you" becomes "the wealth of the *west is transferred* to you, *the possessions of the peoples* will be brought into your midst"[201]
>
> 60.6 "They will bring gold and frankincense, and will proclaim the praises of the Lord" becomes "They will *be burdened with* gold and frankincense, and *those who come with them* will be declaring the praises of the Lord"[202]
>
> 60.10 "sons of foreigners (בני־נכר) will build your walls and their kings will minister to you" becomes "sons of *Gentiles* (בני עממיא) will build up your walls and their kings will minister to you (ומלכיהון ישממשוניך)"
>
> 60.11 "so that the wealth of nations (גוים) will come to you with their kings led in procession (ומלכיהם נוגים)" becomes "men may bring into your *midst the possessions* of the *Gentiles* (נכסי עממיא), with their kings *chained* (ומלכיהון זקיקין)"
>
> 60.16 "you will suck the milk of nations (גוים) and (at) the breast of kings" becomes "you will *be satisfied with the possessions of the Gentiles* (ותסבעין נכסי עממיא), you will *be indulged with the plunder* of *their* kings (ובביגת מלכיהין תתפנוין)..."[203]

In each of these instances the specifying (and narrowing) tendency of the meturgeman is evident. Not only does the general interpretive mood of the Targum appear to carry a more polemical and adversarial tone regarding the Gentiles, there are in fact moments where it appears to subvert language in Isaiah, which might have otherwise held the possibility of a more favorable view of Gentiles. With regard to Isaiah 60, the Targum nuances the text so as to highlight the issues of repatriation of the land and restoration of wealth and prosperity to Jerusalem. Elements of the Isaianic vision that might be understood to hold out hope for the worship of Yahweh by nations and kings have either been subverted (*Targum. Isaiah* 60.6) or minimized (*Targum Isaiah* 60.2-3,14). Thus *Targum Isaiah* represents an interpretive strategy with regard to an important tradition for the author of Revelation, which moves in an increasingly particularistic direction and undermines those prophetic elements that might be termed 'universalistic' in scope.

b. <u>1QM (*War Scroll*)</u>

Earlier in this study, a brief overview of the Qumran literature suggested that this corpus of material was largely fruitless for the present study. Its predominantly dualistic view necessarily results in an absence of examples in which the kind of tension being evaluated in the present study exists. As noted above, however, Wilcox has pointed out that 1QM 12.13-14 (cf. 19.6)

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[201] In this instance the change is not so much in terms of the intent of the text but does suggest that the meturgeman has a more specific location (Rome?) in mind.

[202] Here is another instance where it appears that the Targum has actually inverted the intent of the MT (and LXX in this case). Rather than envisioning nations and kings who contribute wealth to the reconstruction of Jerusalem as proclaiming the praises of the Lord, it appears that those who proclaim the praises of the Lord are here *the exiles* returning with them!

[203] The addition of the third person plural possessive pronoun "*their* kings" may reflect a harmonization with 60.11. More significantly, however, is the fact that the LXX renders καὶ πλοῦτον βασιλέων φάγεσαι (see Chilton, *Isaiah Targum*, 116).

employs precisely the language of Isaiah 60.11, which is also found in Rev 21.24-26, and *Targum Isaiah*. What we find here is in fact a partial quotation of Isaiah 60.11a, followed by an adaptation of 60.11b, and then a conflation with part of 60.14, which continues the rhetoric of subjugation and subservience of all the opponents of the 'sons of light' found in the previous lines of columns 11 and 12.

Beginning with the last word of line 13, there appears to be a direct quotation חיל גואים פתחי שער[י]ך להביא אליך ("Open your gates so that the wealth of nations be brought to you") which simply excludes יומם ולילה לא יסגרו ("they will not be shut day and night"). Of further interest is the interpretive move made in this document with what in Isaiah 60.11 is the second group of those who enter the continually open gates: namely "their kings led captive / in procession." In 1QM 12.14 the author takes up "their kings" and, rather than following the image of triumphal procession, assigns them the role of Israel's servants מלכיהם ישרתוך ("their kings will serve you"). The author(s) of 1QM was obviously aware of the wider context of Isaiah 60 as is evidenced by his addition of the phrase והשתחוו לך כול מעניך "all your oppressors will bow before you" (cf. Ps 72.9-10 [71.9-10] for a similar linking of motifs which envision enemies "licking dust" and kings bringing tribute).[204]

Clearly, from the perspective of this tradition preserved at Qumran, Isaiah 60 represented validation of future vindication at the expense of those whom they viewed either as opponents or impure. In each of these three segments of 1QM 12.13-14 the use of traditional material appears to serve the purpose of buttressing rhetoric aimed against opponents with Scriptural support. The wider context of column 12 suggests a perspective that leaves no room for a possible eschatological conversion or inclusion of the Gentiles as a result of God's vindicating action on behalf of the community. The immediate context includes polemic against "kings" (12.7-8 "we will [treat] kings with contempt, with jeers and mockery the heroes, for the Lord is holy and the King of glory is with us"), and descriptions of (true) Israel's ultimate triumph with the help of a messianic figure (12.11-12 "Place your hand on the neck of your enemies and your foot on the piles of slain! Strike the peoples, your foes, and may your sword consume guilty flesh!"). As a result of such envisioned vindication, the author(s) describes all the hallmarks of material blessings associated with it – flocks, silver, gold and precious stones (12.12). It is this combination of subjugation of 'peoples' with material restoration that provides the conceptual framework for this particular utilization of Isaiah 60.

What evidence is there in Revelation to link its conception of the New Jerusalem with the type of traditional interpretation expressed in the two examples from Jewish literature cited above? There is enough creative adjustment of this traditional source in 21.24-26 to suggest that Isaiah 60 was not simply exegeted and quoted verbatim but rather intentionally appropriated. Several features of 21.24-26 in particular suggest that while the author is largely working within the interpretive stream described above, he also makes adjustments intended to reflect his own theological interests and rhetorical agenda. A number of changes to the text of Isaiah 60 may be observed in 21.24-26: (1) the inversion of the "nations / kings" in Isaiah 60.3 to "the kings / the nations"; (2) the

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[204] The term שחה denotes primarily 'homage' and is used both in contexts of the worship of Israel's God and the response appropriate to an earthly monarch.

addition of a definite article for both "the nations" (τὰ ἔθνη) and "the kings of the earth" (οἱ βασιλεῖς); (3) the qualifying addition of (τῆς γῆς) as a way of keeping the idiom in question consistent;[205] (4) the insertion δόξα and τιμή for the MT חיל (LXX πλοῦτος) is less theologically determinative than some commentators suppose given the wider possibilities of rendering δόξα as "splendour / grandeur"[206] and τιμή as "price, value, payment".[207] This is not to suggest that these terms don't also have a more religious tenor elsewhere in Revelation (cf. 5.13; 7.12; 19.1). However, they may well represent the author's attempt to bridge both the conceptual conditions of the New Jerusalem with the semantic possibilities of the tradition he is using here; (5) the reference to the continual openness of the gates of the city in negative terms ("its gates will never be closed by day"); (6) a distancing of the kings from the nations (MT 60.11 "their kings") by removal of the Hebrew pronominal suffix.

Solomonic Traditions

Finally, while the influence of traditions regarding the kings of the earth in the eschatological future such as Isaiah 60; 2.2,5 have often been cited in support of the several traditional images found in 21.24-26, the question must be raised as to what extent the visions of trito-Isaiah may in fact not be more contemporary with Revelation than antecedent *at a conceptual level*! In light of previous observations regarding the obvious influence of Solomonic traditions in the first instance of the phrase "the kings of the earth" (1.5) – and the possibilities of a unique link between 1.5 and 21.24 as the first and last instances of this phrase in Revelation – a similar exploration is necessary with respect to 21.24.

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[205] Both Fekkes, *Isaiah*, 282, and Bauckham, *Climax*, 313-314 recognize these first three changes by the author.

[206] G. von Rad & G. Kittel, "δόξα," *TDNT* 2:233-253. Two important points must be made regarding this particular instance of the term: (1) there is evidence of its use in the royal sense of splendour in Josephus' account of the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon – μετὰ πολλῆς δόξης καὶ πλούτου παρασκευῆς (*Ant.*, 8, 166) – an interesting link with the tradition under consideration as a larger interpretive framework for the idiom "the kings of the earth" in Revelation; and, (2) in 21.24 δόξα is inserted by John despite the fact that חיל (Isa 60.5,11) is the corresponding MT term. *Contra* Bauckham, *Climax*, 315, who appeals to the use of כבוד later on (Isa 60.13; 61.6; 66.13). It is this later Hebrew term which generally informs NT use of δόξα.

[207] J. Schneider, "τιμή," *TDNT* 8:169-180 (esp. 178-179) suggests that τιμή in conjunction with δόξα is a reference to earthly goods and thus reflects a literal rather than spiritually metaphorical sense.

Several points within the spectrum of Davidic and Solomonic traditions require attention with respect to the language and symbolic rhetoric of 21.24. In the first place the possibility that Psalm 89 may conceptually influence this vision of the recreated cosmos should be explored as a way of linking this text with 1.5. An interesting parallel exists in the way in which both passages anticipate the function of "the kings of the earth": in Psalm 89.16 "...*the people* (LXX ὁ λαὸς)...*shall walk, O Lord, by / in the light of your countenance...*" while in Revelation 21.23b-24a "...*the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb. The nations* (τὰ ἔθνη) *will walk by its light...*" Here the concepts of God as the source of light, the removal of all "unrighteousness," and the universal recognition of His Kingship are present in both passages. At the same time, this Psalm asserts the conquest over enemies (89.18) – a theme well established in Revelation generally, and in particular with regard to "the kings of the earth" (6.15-17; 16.14-16; 17.12-14; 19.17-21).

Second, the potential connection between 21.24 and Solomonic traditions appears to have some possibilities in light of the LXX expansion of the wisdom tradition in 1 Kings 4.34 [5.14] where "the kings of the earth" take gifts (ἐλάμβανεν δῶρα παρὰ πάντων τῶν βσσιλέων τῆς γῆς) to Solomon. This interpretive expansion of the MT reflects the language of tribute / tax exacted by a client-king. It implies the subordinate status of these "kings" who acknowledge the superiority of Solomon. This motif is apparent in the HB where virtually identical language is used to describe a future re-instated version of Jerusalem (Ps 68.29 [LXX 67.30]; 76.12-13 [75.12-13]). These statements of hope regarding the future restoration of Jerusalem and its Temple provide the Isaianic visions the motif of the subservient homage of formerly oppressive human rulers. Clearly from parallel interpretations of Isaiah 60 (*Excursus Four*) this appropriation of such motifs was in fact understood in this way.

Synthesis: Rev 21.24-26 and the "Establishment of God's Rule" Paradigm

To contextualize 21.24-26 within the larger narrative framework of Revelation, it is critical to recognize that the differences between this text and other expressions of justice and vindication within the document are less real than apparent. There are significant ways in which this text affirms basic assumptions regarding the ultimate establishment of the rule of God held throughout Revelation. The use of universal

language here can be attributed to a number of important narrative and traditional factors. First, the concern of the final vision to provide a detailed description of the New Jerusalem necessitates the use of certain literary and symbolic features not previously employed by the author. Second, full consideration must be given to the role the "Babylon judgment vision" plays (17.1-18.24) for the author's inclusion of "the kings of the earth" in the vision of the New Jerusalem: their important role in the former vision makes them an obvious choice as an anti-type in John's communicative strategy. Third, the traditional material (Isa 60) used here corresponds to a wider interpretive milieu in which polemical interpretive strategies more severe than John's are evident. Finally, Solomonic traditions (cf.1.5; 5.5) play a conceptually programmatic role in John's symbolic world. Thus, an outright reversal of referents (or genuine conversion of such) for this final instance of the idiom seems improbable.

5.6 Summary

This chapter has attempted to come to terms with the use of the designations for human referents in Revelation by engaging with several lines of inquiry. First, each instance of these expressions has been placed not only within its immediate literary context, but against the background of an overall 'narrative logic' reading of the document adopted by this study. Second, important observations have been made regarding how the author may have employed and creatively appropriated OT traditions in order to advance his own theological concerns and rhetorical agenda. This has led to a third arena for evaluation: whether the author of Revelation may be seen to participate in a wider interpretive strategy regarding these traditions for which evidence may also be found in early Jewish literature. The results of these investigations may be summarized with several observations. The majority of evidence presented concerns the idiom "the kings of the earth."

Analysis of the various instances of this idiom suggests the emergence of several key traditions, which contribute to its overall symbolic function in Revelation: Psalm 2.1-2, 8-9; 89.28; Isaiah 34.12; Ezekiel 26-27; 38-39. From the description of the Davidic heir in Psalm 89, the phrase "the kings of the earth" in 1.5 not only recalls the height of the Solomonic era. It also invests the exalted Christ with the expectations and credentials

of the future messianic king through whom the kingdom of God is fully established over all creation. The Psalm 2 tradition places human political rulers and all those who join them in opposing God squarely in the path of ultimate judgment and failure. This symbolic significance of the idiom in Psalm 2 carries pejorative weight in every instance (with the exception of 1.5 and 21.24). Ultimately, John believes that the warning of Psalm 2.10-12 will go unheeded (cf. Rev 19.11-21). The list of Israel's opponents in Isaiah 34.12 informs John's creative crafting of similar lists of antagonists in Revelation (6.15; 10.11; 19.18), thus providing him with a model for polemic against those whom he understands to oppose both God and faithful Christian communities. Related to this interpretive strategy is the author's willingness to add the qualifying genitival phrase τῆς γῆς to other OT traditions which employ מלכים / βασιλεῖς language, or to convert similarly functioning idioms within such sources into this particular designation because of its importance to his communicative strategy (cf. Isa 23.8-9; 34.12; Ezek 26.16; 39.18).

John's appropriation of biblical traditions regarding human political rulers and the Day of the Lord reveals elements of an interpretive scheme. On the one hand, the cosmic scope of his visions is much more universal – both in terms of the entirety of humanity and the demonic forces manipulating human rulers and nations. On the other hand, his detail and polemic regarding judgment and vindication produce a specifying and narrowing effect. In doing so, his interpretive strategy bears remarkable similarities to other early Jewish literature such as apocalyptic writings, certain examples from Qumran, and the earliest layers of Targumic traditions. This evidence suggests that rather than having a much more "optimistic" or "universally inclusive" perspective of eschatological salvation than its Jewish counterparts, Revelation shares many similar hopes and expectations for the ultimate vindication of both God and the faithful communities.

This chapter has evaluated several designations in Revelation by which John uses universal language. The question of to whom these idioms refer raises issues about their narrative function in the document. While John does not reveal names of actual rulers, he does use cryptic descriptions on certain occasions (16.12-14; 17.12-16). His various designations suggest that he targets categories of actual people who fit those descriptions. Further, the traditions that he employed and appropriated often had specific referents as

well. To what extent, then, may one speak of actual referents for the final instance of this idiom in the vision of the New Jerusalem? The hermeneutical trail that the author expects his readers to follow throughout the document (1.20; 13.9,18; 14.12; 17.5,9) no longer appears necessary or even realistic with the change in location (sphere) and the language of ultimate cosmological reality unbounded by temporal or spatial restrictions. The implications of this final narrative movement for 21.24-26, as well as the symbolic language of vindication and exaltation from its traditional source in Isa 60, together suggest that attributing specific referents to the idiom in this setting lies outside the intention of the author himself.

How the data from this investigation informs the apparently universal reference to "the kings of the earth" (21.24,26), illustrates John's flexibility in employing symbols and idioms in independent visionary sub-units (see also 17.12-16 and 18.9-10). To some degree, the variegated traditions and models he employs determine narrative consistency for John. Thus his pastiche of traditions regarding the stance of human political rulers toward the final establishment of God's Kingdom at times reflect mutually exclusive concerns which have no need to be reconciled in a narrative chronological sense. The criteria for consistency, with which the author seems to operate, are predominantly at the conceptual / symbolic world level. While aware of its subsequently polemical and antagonistic character, his first use of this idiom serves the positive purpose of describing the universal scope of the exalted Christ's reign (1.5). Further, in the midst of a series of thoroughly pejorative uses of the idiom in the visions of Babylon's judgment, John inserts it into two distinct visionary depictions which – if taken literally at the level of narrative chronology – would appear to contradict one another (17.15-16 versus 18.9-10). Thus, it becomes much less surprising – and perhaps not even entirely unexpected – that a similar re-use of this symbolic idiom resurfaces at a point in the narrative when a literally chronological reading of the text would appear to rule out such a possibility (19.17-21 versus 21.24,26). The nature of John's movement between these symbolic referential and visionary uses of this idiom forcefully suggests that in order to attribute a perspective of "universal salvation" to its final appearance in 21.24, more concrete internal and textual evidence must be produced than seems to be available.

The cumulative evidence from an evaluation of the narrative function, tradition-base, and a wider interpretive framework, into which "the kings of the earth" rhetoric of Revelation appears to fit, suggests that the primary issue for the author in these contexts is the establishment of the rule of God. To this end, the programmatic function of 1.5 for the overall "narrative logic" of the document and the decidedly symbolic character of 21.24 suggest that both the Solomonic and New Jerusalem traditions are employed by the author to advance this larger concern.

PART C: CONCLUSION

CHAPTER SIX

6.1 Review of Thesis Aims

This study has evaluated the following problem in John's Apocalypse: How will the establishment of God's eschatological rule determine the fate of earth's peoples outside the Christian communities? Will the nations persist in rebellion against God, or does John envision a comprehensive moment of repentance and conversion? What can we learn about the narrative tension between the author's universal language in scenes of eschatological worship and his global descriptions of judgment? Our findings suggest that, evaluated from both a literary-narrative and tradition-historical perspective, this tension in Revelation is less real than apparent.

The contention of this study (Chapter 1) has been that our difficulty with this issue stems, in part, from a lack of comparable literary data. Revelation's creative differences from other NT literature imply great literary isolation and theological disparity. This impression, however, misses the mark considerably; in fact, there is much evidence of a vibrant literary and religious environment in which apocalyptic visions of the future age were commonplace. A world exists within which the images and symbols of John's visions – and indeed the logical and narrative tensions they sometimes create – find their place in a considerable company of literary "conversation partners." Chapter 2 presented a survey of how commentators on Revelation addressed this issue. Primary observations were made as to what degree the matrix of apocalyptic literature in the 2TP was taken seriously.

Therefore, the narrative tension described in John's Apocalypse has been evaluated along three related lines of inquiry: First, in Chapter 3, several early Jewish documents that contain eschatological visions with universal language were analysed. These texts were read within their immediate literary context; further, their function within the "narrative trajectory" of that given document was also evaluated (literary-sequential criticism). Second, observations were made regarding how a given author employed and creatively appropriated biblical traditions in order to advance his own theological concerns and communicative strategy through these visions (history of traditions). Third, the analysis of Revelation in Chapters 4 and 5 produced evidence that

John participated in wider interpretive patterns found in early Jewish literature. Common use of literary-narrative conventions (language of vindication, and narrative progression, contextual qualifying markers, "stock" idioms and epithets) characterizes his appropriation of biblical traditions vis-à-vis the fate of the nations that necessarily qualifies and restricts eschatological visions with universal language.

6.2 Synthesis of Observations I: Early Jewish Literature

Chapter 3 evaluated a sampling of Jewish apocalyptic thought, wherein the authors sought to rationalize present crises in terms of God's definitive action in the future. In cases such as the *Similitudes* and 4 Ezra, the questions surrounding God's future activity emphasize its effect for the faithful (with humanity at large in the background). Conversely, in the final chapters of Tobit, and the *Animal Apocalypse*, God's consummation of all things is more focused on creation and humanity as a whole.

Each of these documents demonstrates to a greater or lesser degree, the following interpretive strategies and patterns in their portrayal of the future age (and specifically, the fate of earth's peoples). (1) *Vindication*: A key feature of biblical traditions with universal language retained by the apocalypticists, was Gentile participation in the future age as a form of vindication. This vindication was depicted variously: as positive (though qualified) response to God (4 Ezra 6.25-28; *1 En.* 50; 90.30,33); in scenes of God's judgment over the nations (4 Ezra 13.5-11; *1 En.* 48.4-5,8-10; 62-63; 90.18-19); in descriptions of the restoration of Israel and Jerusalem (Tob 13.11-17; 4 Ezra 10.27,39-56; *1 En.* 90.28-29,33); and, through Gentile acknowledgment of the supremacy of Israel's faith (*1 En.* 62-63; 90.30; Tob 14.5-6). (2) *Narrative Development*: In each early Jewish document considered, some form of narrative movement was discernible *particularly* regarding the final fate of the nations. In Tobit, we found remarkable development from nationalistic to universal categories in the main character's outlook. The *Similitudes* demonstrates dramatic change in the attitude of the earth's powerful people toward Israel's God (*1 En.* 62.6,9; 63.1-4) – yet without future hope (*1 Enoch* 62.4-5,10-11; 63.6-9). Most striking is the gradated narrative movement in the *Animal Apocalypse* from judgment and condemnation of the nations to unqualified acceptance and participation in the future age (*1 En.* 90.16-19,30,33,37-38). However, the opposite is true in 4 Ezra

where transformation in the main character (4 Ezra 9-10) results in a narrower, more negative view of the fate of the nations. (3) *Literary Qualifiers*: We have seen how these documents crafted visions of universal participation in the future age with literary signals and theologically delimiting language. This was most apparent where the language of "mercy" left a degree of uncertainty (Tob 13; *1 En.* 50), or where the universal terms of a dream were significantly narrowed in its corresponding interpretation (4 Ezra 11-12; 13). (4) *Use of "Stock" Idioms and Epithets*: Common use of designations such as "the inhabitants of the earth," and "the kings of the earth," suggests that these authors viewed humanity as predominantly antagonistic toward God and the faithful communities.

6.3 Synthesis of Observations II: Revelation

Chapter 5 underscored instances where Revelation shares the literary-narrative conventions of apocalyptic thought outlined above. To these we may add the following ways John was seen to qualify universal language. (1) *Specific Narrative Structures*: The juxtaposition of the two "city visions" (Babylon, 17.1-19.10; New Jerusalem, 21.9-22.5) illustrates the determinative influence of a larger narrative structure upon internal sub-structures, symbols and idiomatic images. Further, the reappearance of symbols from messages to the churches in the New Jerusalem visions suggests important narrative connections. This is also true of exhortations to "insiders" which appear throughout Revelation – including eschatological visions. (2) *Favoured OT Traditions*: While this study has demonstrated John's wide-ranging use of traditions, it is also clear that certain biblical texts (notably Ps 2; Isa 60) dominated his interpretive agenda. They not only provided linguistic material for his visions but also influenced his perspective of those outside the community of faith – not unlike their influence on early Jewish apocalypticists. (3) *Universal Constitution of the People of God*: John differs from his early Jewish counterparts through his principled view of how the people of God are constituted – "from every tribe, tongue, people and nation" (5.9; 7.9). We have seen that this view does *not* predetermine John's use of biblical traditions elsewhere in Revelation. Nevertheless, it provides an additional element to the conceptual framework within which universal language functioned. (4) *Christological Identity*: Our examination of two critical texts (1.5; 21.24-26) reveals that key Davidic / Solomonic traditions (Ps 89; 1 Kgs

5.14) inform John's vision of the exalted Christ. These biblical traditions contribute universal language and designations for earth's peoples that appear in visions depicting God's eschatological rulership.

The features of John's eschatological expectation regarding the fate of the nations are consistent with patterns of interpretation found in early Jewish literature. However, far from relegating these universal traditions in Revelation to the obscurity of awkwardly misplaced sources, or simply assuming that "tension" is inherent in apocalyptic thought, the evidence is strong that an intentional, interpretive agenda is at work in John's Apocalypse. This is the contention of several commentators, especially literary-narrative critics; where this study diverges from them, however, is to propose intentional reasons for this convention. Here it is argued that universal language does not necessarily presuppose universal salvation; rather, it serves to vindicate the faithful community, and validate their present circumstances in light of a future reversal.

6.4 Outlook and Prospects for Further Research

This study evaluated potential parallels between Revelation and early Jewish apocalyptic literature. Much can yet be done to explore these literary and interpretive relationships. From this study, several areas of further inquiry emerge. First, the limits of this study dictate that several relevant Jewish documents have not been taken into account.[1] Second, how subsequent Christian apocalypses and Jewish writings developed the interpretive strategies described in this study is an important next step. Is there evidence that the fate of the nations (or opponents) was conceived in more, or less, universal terms? What influence might Revelation have had on such interpretive tendencies? Finally, the narrative tension in Revelation described above creates a pastoral dynamic worthy of analysis (i.e. the issue of motivation of the faithful). What are John's specific pastoral strategies and how might they inform further study on this issue?

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[1] This is particularly so of *2 Baruch* and the *Sybilline Oracles*. *2 Baruch*, while exhibiting strong similarities to 4 Ezra, nevertheless presents a unique perspective and deserves detailed analysis. In this regard see Frederick James Murphy, *The Structure and Meaning of 2 Baruch* (SBLDS 78; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 136-142, who contrasts the view of enemies in *2 Bar.* with that of 4 Ezra. His analysis also suggests narrative development in the form of transformation of Baruch. The *Sybilline Oracles*, while presenting textual difficulty, reflect similarities to Revelation in their communicative strategy and appropriation of biblical traditions (esp. Ps 2). See John Collins, *Seers, Sybils and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1997).

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